Commentary

Volume Seventy-eight, Number Three, September 1984

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Books in Review: Michael Novak / Richard S. Levy / Diana West / Ronald Bailey / Anita Susan Grossman / Chester E. Finn, Jr.

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Letters from Readers

Lebanon

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is possible to compliment Michael Ledeen ["The Lesson of Lebanon," May] for a thoughtful analysis of the Reagan administration's actions in Lebanon and to agree with many of his conclusions but still part company with him on what appears to be his major premise: that our retreat from forward positions in Lebanon "was not an isolated case but part of a systematic pattern of reluctance in both the executive and legislative branches to use military power in support of our diplomatic objectives."

Mr. Ledeen appears to commit the error of judging the whole of the administration's policy on the use of force on the basis of a single and rather unique instance of its exercise. In doing so, he fails to mention some other very real "lessons of Lebanon."

First, the United States conducted itself as a great power during its involvement. A great power cannot become captive to the strategic interests of any one of its allies or to a conflict on the periphery of its vital interests. However important the war in Lebanon was to the Israelis, it was not, save in the threat of its escalation, a challenge to America's vital interests. The administration quite accurately gauged the nation's interests there. Because these were not insignificant, it attempted a gambit in the hopes of a somewhat valuable gain. Having lost, for reasons quite accurately covered by Mr. Ledeen, it withdrew. The administration did not allow victory in Lebanon to become its foreign policy. Rather, our posture in Lebanon remained a function of a far broader design. We withdrew when the conflict became a threat to those broader goals. A great power can and should expect tactical setbacks in pursuit of its strategic goals. Such setbacks can cause us to wince, but ought not force us to give up the more important pursuits. It cannot fairly be said that the Reagan administration has given up its larger objectives. It has abandoned neither the area nor its allies.

Second, the deployment of the Marines and the use of air and naval power in Lebanon make future threats of the use of American force more, not less, credible. We are currently engaged in a war of words with Iran and Iraq concerning events which would follow an attempt to close the Strait of Hormuz. Our willingness to take concrete steps in Lebanon in defense of interests which cannot be accurately described as strategic renders very believable the American announcements concerning our willingness to use force to keep that passage open. A fairly measured response to an attack on our peripheral interest implies the scope of the American response to truly threatening moves by hostile powers.

Third, the impact of Lebanon cannot be separated from the impact of the administration's response in Grenada and its policy in Central America. America could not be expected to return immediately to the full role of a great power following the nadir of its ability to project force and influence so completely demonstrated by the collapse of the Shah and the debacle in the Iranian desert. Slowly, but very surely, the administration has been reintroducing the option of force in support of diplomacy. It does not serve our interests to focus solely upon a setback, allowing it to eclipse entirely the administration's firmness in Central America or its liberation of Grenada. Of course it is better to bat 1.000. But this is not going to happen. The mark of a great power is its willingness to tolerate a temporary reversal in anticipation of renewed opportunities. I believe the Reagan administration has demonstrated this firmness. I believe also that Assad and, more importantly, the Soviets recognize this.

These three things having been said, I repeat my admiration for many of Mr. Ledeen's conclusions. Critical among them is the recognition that this executive as well as future ones must continually remind themselves that the use of force has been and will always be reflexively rejected in some quarters, and that those who do the rejecting can be very noisy. We must depend on the efforts of writers like Mr. Ledeen to counteract their influence. This is done most effectively when time is taken to re-

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fine criticisms so that they take account of successes as well as setbacks.

HUGH HEWITT
Washington, D.C.

MICHAEL LEDEEN writes:

I am grateful for Hugh Hewitt's kind words, and wish I could share his optimistic assessment of the consequences of our behavior during the Lebanese war. On one point we are in complete agreement: the Reagan administration has behaved better than its predecessor. Unfortunately, its performance is not yet nearly good enough.

Mr. Hewitt argues that we tried a gambit, failed, and then cut our losses, but that we have "abandoned neither the area nor [our] allies." This is not the impression the major players have, for the destiny of Lebanon is now being determined primarily by Syria, and our role is marginal at best. Amin Gemayel, who was publicly embraced by President Reagan, must now barter for his survival with various Syrian and Iranian surrogates without the benefit of any American security, and the Soviet Union is gradually gaining leverage in the region as a whole. The Egyptians' diplomatic recognition of the USSR is not unrelated to our failure in Lebanon, and it was preceded by a harsh statement from President Mubarak to the effect that "we hoped the United States would play a major role in the future of the region [read Lebanon]; it failed, and we are accordingly now turning to the other superpower."

Finally, Mr. Hewitt believes that "our posture in Lebanon remained a function of a far broader design. We withdrew when the conflict became a threat to those broader goals." This is whistling in the dark; we had no such broader design when we entered Lebanon. We withdrew not on the basis of strategic considerations, but because American public opinion was growing increasingly hostile to the presence of the Marines in Beirut, and we were unable to use American military power effectively against our enemies in Lebanon. Far from serving as a warning to other countries, our defeat in Lebanon can only have encouraged our enemies to believe that Iran is the real model for American policy, and Grenada was a momentary aberration, the lash of the tail of the paper tiger. Mr. Hewitt may believe, as I do, that they would be mistaken in drawing such conclusions, but it is inevitable that they should have done so, as it is inevitable that we shall pay a high price for our Lebanese defeat.

Best-Case Thinking

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his brilliant article, "Best-Case Thinking" [May], Owen Harries traces the "deeper roots" of such thinking to the universalistic liberal tradition that denies "the reality of conflict in the name of a fundamental harmony of interest. . . ." Since "there are no real intractable conflicts of interest," it follows that enmity among nations "is illusory and unnecessary."

But explaining one set of ideas

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by another separates them from their social context, as if they existed apart from the people who believed them. By asking a different kind of question—what sort of people, sharing which values and justifying what kind of practices, would act on these beliefs in order to shore up their way of life and tear down their opponents?—the tenacity with which these ideas are held and the immense challenge they pose to foreign policy will become apparent.

Does anybody actually believe in the universal harmony of interests? I think not. The idea is recognizably stupid. In fact, the very people who argue the best-case thesis in foreign policy also argue the worst-case thesis in domestic policy. Harmony in domestic policy, they claim, is the ideology of the oppressor. There are irreconcilable conflicts between the haves and have-nots, conflicts which cannot be compromised but only overcome by struggle. Foreign policy, apparently, is different. Why?

Anyone who believes in a worst case or a best case all the time in regard to everything is probably insane. In fact, many of the people who hold a best-case belief about the Soviet Union hold a worst-case belief about capitalism. Now that Henry Jackson is gone, I cannot think of a single committed environmentalist who is also a proponent of a strong national defense. After all, if corporate capitalism causes cancer, who would want to defend a system that kills people for profit?

Now we have a more varied and more interesting question to ask: who sees harmony in international affairs and hostility in domestic politics? What else do the people believe who claim that the United States government vastly overstates the enmity of the Soviet Union? They believe in equality of condition. They are part and parcel of many other movements dedicated to the diminution of distinctions among people—the civil-rights movement, the women's movement, the movements for children's rights, animal rights (placing animal pain on a plane with human pain), and the rights of the elderly, gay rights, and on and on. When I grew up, for instance, there were two standard themes in the Second Avenue Yiddish theater, the bad son and the good parents and the ungrateful daughter and the good parents. Now all we hear about is child abuse, state intervention obviously being required to prevent parents from doing terrible things to their young. Harmony of interests, indeed!

How can harmony abroad be reconciled with hatred at home? Take the critics at their word: intolerable, unconscionable, unbearable inequalities at home, they believe, are justified by paranoia abroad. It is not that they think the Soviet system is benevolent or that it provides a better way of life. They are not that dumb, or dumb at all. It is rather that they care about how people live with other people in the U.S., not in the USSR. It is their passion for equality of condition and their rage at inequality that leads them to a portrayal of an international heaven spoiled by people bent on maintaining a domestic hell. Acknowledging a Soviet threat would mean agreeing that: (a) the social system of the United States is worth defending; (b) other systems are worse; and (c) a morally legitimate government has the right to divert resources from domestic (i.e., egalitarian) to military (i.e., inegalitarian) purposes.

Foreign policy is fought at home. Precisely because those who adopt the best-case thesis abroad do so to support a vision of the worst-case at home, we should not be surprised at the tenacity with which they hold on to optimistic views of Soviet behavior. People who see themselves threatened by mobilization for war, under the aegis of military hierarchy and capitalist competition, are not likely to accept the hypothesis of threat while there is some other mode of explanation that will leave intact their dream of the good, i.e., egalitarian, life.

AARON WILDAVSKY
University of California
Berkeley, California

Lillian Hellman

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thank you for Samuel McCracken's "'Julia' & Other Fictions by Lillian Hellman" [June]. The late Miss Hellman's mendacity is, as Mr. McCracken suggests in his final paragraph, far less important than the fact that "she . . . manipulated millions of readers and moviegoers into admiring her as an ethical exemplar."

For all that, the real issue is that there truly are millions of people out there eager to be gulled, or at least to be gulled along certain specific lines. I know some of them personally, and to tweak them overmuch on certain subjects (e.g., the line that the West is proto-fascist and the East simply has a few technical problems to iron out in its march to the terrestrial paradise) is tantamount to attacking their religion—you lose friends that way; or you discover, sadly, that friendship is not of great importance to those eager to be gulled. . . .

JOHN R. DUNLAP
University of Santa Clara
Santa Clara, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I write to express my admiration for Samuel McCracken's article and to correct a minor point.

Mr. McCracken writes: "Nor were they [the apologists for the Moscow trials, including Lillian Hellman] bothered by the oddity that the defendants who had pled guilty were then tried. This alone ought to have alerted them. . . ." The guilty plea which replaces a trial is known in Anglo-American courts but not in continental European or, I suspect, in Russian courts. Confessions in these courts do not make a trial legally unnecessary and are not equivalent to guilty pleas.

For any unbiased person there were many indications that the Moscow show trials were based on false accusations and that the confessions too were false, as Khrushchev implied and even Lillian Hellman belatedly admitted.

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her book, *An Unfinished Woman*, Lillian Hellman relates that while visiting Moscow in 1944, she had been given permission to visit the Russian front in Poland, to cover the fighting there. In "I Meet the Front-Line Russians," an article published in *Collier's* magazine, on March 31, 1945, she reported her experiences with the gallant Soviets—describing their restraint, their wisdom, their hospitality, and their courtesy.

I too met the front-line Russians. I met them, like Miss Hellman, at almost the same place and time, in Poland in January 1945. And, surprise!, my experiences with the Soviet soldiers were just the opposite of Miss Hellman's.

I had escaped from a subcamp

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of Auschwitz. I was hiding in a hayloft awaiting the departure of the Germans and the arrival of the Red Army. After the Germans left, I came out of hiding and moved into the farmhouse. There we were: the farmer's wife, her daughter, and one young Polish farm worker, awaiting the "liberators."

They came, about four days after the last German had left. After both women had been raped, one Soviet soldier started to give us a lecture. With his submachine gun swinging from his right shoulder, reeking of alcohol, he stepped up to the little kitchen window, ripped out the shabby curtains, and threw them on the dirt floor of the kitchen, spitting out the word "bourgeois" in contempt. . . .

This first experience with the Great Red Army was followed by many others I had over a period of one year, none of them supporting Lillian Hellman's glowing description. . . .

HERBERT LOEBEL
Sherman, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thanks to Samuel McCracken for his impressively documented—and sorely needed—critique of Lillian Hellman's vaunted literary "integrity." At the beginning of the article, however, Mr. McCracken makes two points on the key issue of Julia's true identity which seem, if I read his words correctly, to cancel each other out.

If we are to accept the strongly persuasive evidence (as both Mr. McCracken and Muriel Gardiner herself apparently do) that Julia and Dr. Gardiner are in reality one and the same, then where does that leave us if, on the other hand, "We may in any event presume that Julia is a real name . . .," since Dr. Gardiner's name (including her code name, Mary) is clearly *not* Julia?

OSCAR M. OSTLUND, JR.
Williamsport, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As the authorized biographer of Lillian Hellman, I have read with interest Samuel McCracken's piece about her in the June issue of COMMENTARY. The biography will contain a documented, objective account of the writing, publication, and reception of her memoir books, among them *Pentimento: A Book of Portraits*. There, I believe, will be the place to deal as they deserve with the questions raised by Mr. McCracken and his research assistants.

WILLIAM ABRAHAMS
Hillsborough, California

SAMUEL MCCRACKEN writes:

John R. Dunlap's summary judgment is one to which I too can subscribe. I am grateful to Ernest van den Haag, both for his praise and for his correction, typical of the fair-mindedness which informs his work.

Herbert Loebel, out of experience as authentic (at least) as Miss Hellman's, rightly reminds us that with the exception of the defendants at the purge trials and the late L. Beria—after his fall—she appears never to have met a Communist she didn't like.

I probably misled Oscar M. Ost-

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lund, Jr. by being less clear than I should have been. I ought to have said, "We may in any event presume that Miss Hellman wishes us to believe that Julia is a real name. . . ."

While regretting William Abrahams's inability or unwillingness to provide answers in a forum that prints rejoinders, I can only look forward to his authorized biography. The question of Miss Hellman's memoirs is indeed a vexed one and for reasons of space I did not present all of the problems I encountered. I am of course at Mr. Abrahams's disposal as he works to disentangle the interwoven strands of fact and fiction in these works.

It will have escaped few readers that between the publication of my essay and the publication of these letters, Miss Hellman has died. Were we to heed the principle of *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*, perhaps this whole discussion would not be taking place. But that principle did not, in her life, seem to have concerned Miss Hellman much. While she did not actually dance upon graves, none of her portraits, acid or otherwise, dealt with a subject who was alive and able to answer her. So we are perhaps honoring her memory by holding it to the standard of honesty she so famously claimed for herself.

Cravat and Caftan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Theodore S. Hamerow's "Cravat Jews and Caftan Jews" [May] with great interest.

In researching the case of Jewish assimilation in Poland for my book on Polish Jewry between the wars, I became aware that the assimilationist Jews in Poland modeled themselves consciously on the assimilated Jews of Germany. How much they succeeded became clearer to me after reading Mr. Hamerow's excellent analysis.

CELIA S. HELLER
Hunter College
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The illuminating essay by Theodore S. Hamerow touched me in a personal way. I was born, raised, and educated in Lithuania, between the two world wars, in the land of the *Ostjuden*, on the border of the world of the German Jews.

I was greatly impressed with Mr. Hamerow's lucid, concise description of the cultural and religious evolution of the German Jewish community, its gradual assimilation, and its sense of alienation from its East European brethren.

The first principal of the Hebrew *Gymnasium* I attended in the early 20's was a German Jew, a former principal of the *Gymnasium* in Königsberg. We were an unruly bunch of ex-yeshiva students. Whenever Dr. Rosenberg was chastising us, he would say: "You *Ostjuden* have *seder* [order] only two nights during the year."

I completely agree with Mr. Hamerow's criticism of the false, simplistic, sentimental "Fiddler on

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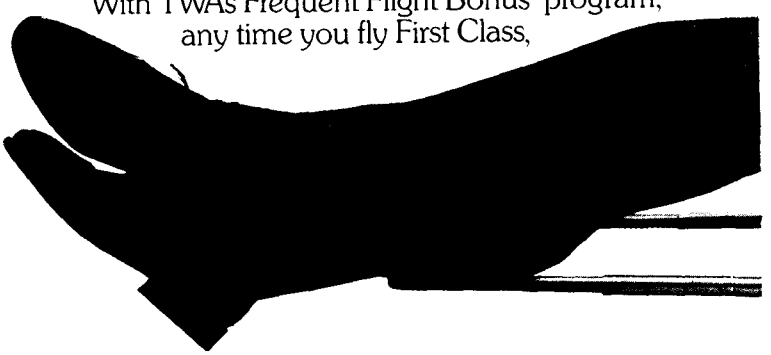

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the Roof" view of cultural life in Eastern Europe. Life in Lithuania was rich in diversity, and in politics it ranged from the extreme Right to the extreme Left. . . .

I differ with Mr. Hamerow only in his comments on Yiddish and Yiddish culture in Israel; he is too pessimistic, in my view. . . . There has been an awakening of interest in Yiddish and its culture in the last decade or two; witness the success of the Yiddish theater in Tel Aviv. The quarterly journal, *Die Goldene Kayt* ("The Golden Chain"), published in Israel, is of the highest literary standard, and a platform for a considerable number of Yiddish poets and writers; . . . and there has also been renewed interest in and knowledge of Yiddish among native Israeli writers. . . .

MEYER BRILL
New Orleans, Louisiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

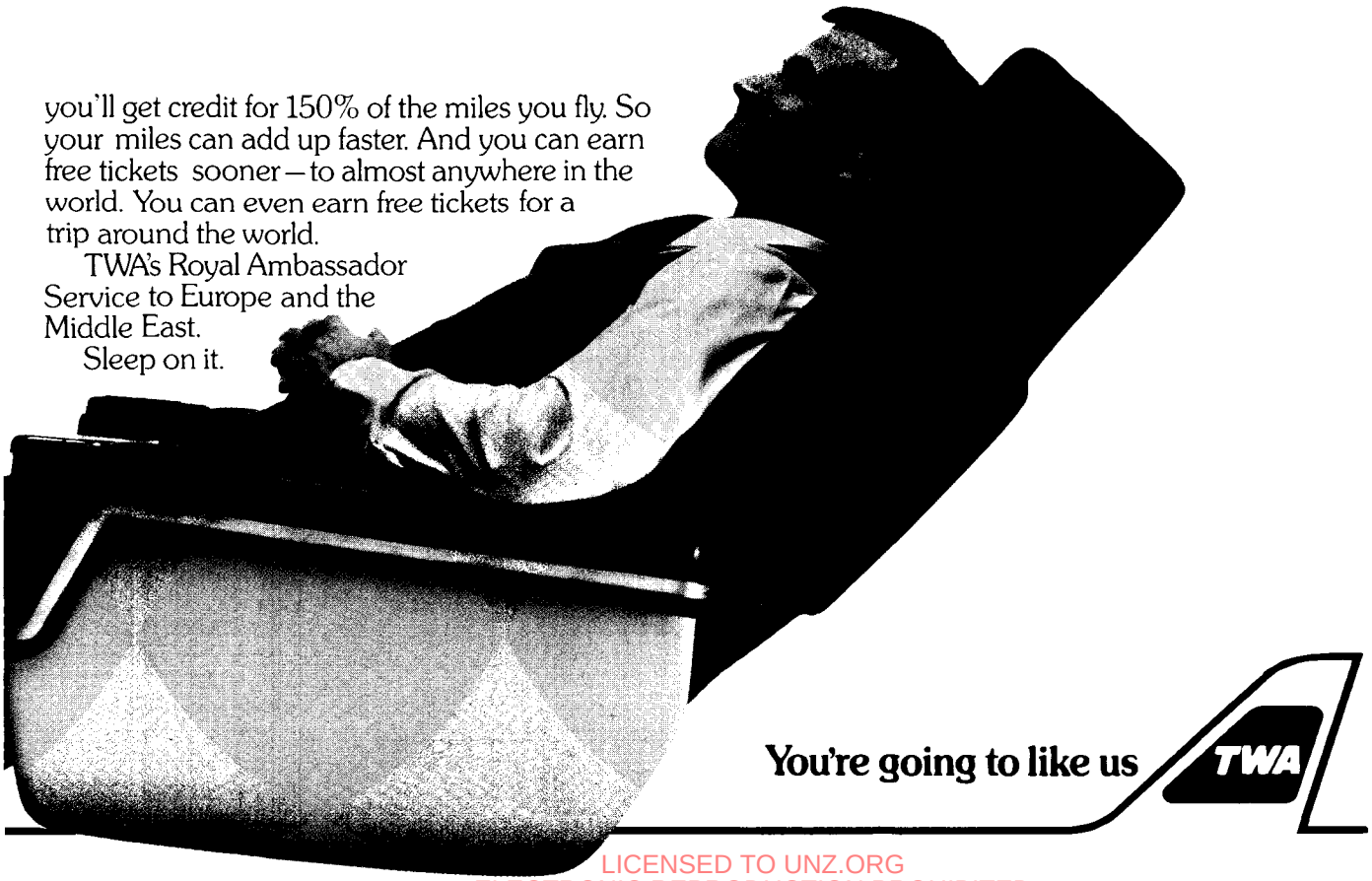
Theodore S. Hamerow's . . . description . . . bears no relation to the Jews who were and are my parents and grandparents, my aunts and uncles, and their cousins and husbands and wives and friends. . . . Perhaps this is because the names of his Jews come out of history books and he has never known the people whose yellowing photographs now become the raw material for academic industry.

Mr. Hamerow grievously misrepresents German Jews with one stereotype after another: they "no longer need[ed] to insist that they [were] indistinguishable from the Gentiles among whom they lived"; they "resolutely tried to rid themselves of all those appearances and attributes regarded as typically Jewish"; they "came to identify [Jewishness] . . . with the mentality of the moneylender and shopkeeper"; and on and on.

But who were these "German Jews"? To a very large extent they were immigrants from Poland and Russia and thereabouts, who in turn, of course, were the children of exiled German Jews—in the long view of history, all Ashkenazim are German Jews. Many of these immigrants had literally walked to Germany, some from as far away as Russia, to go to German universities, to learn, to improve their lot. The so-called German Jews were often first- or second-generation immigrants. There is no discontinuity between Eastern and Central European Jews, but rather a continuum that, within living memory, spanned the full range of European history, from the Middle Ages to modernity. . . .

What is so wrong with a wave of bright, eager immigrants flattering an immensely attractive culture with imitation? Isn't this what happens everywhere under similar circumstances? Isn't this what happened in America? . . .

Is assimilation really an unmitigated sin? Is it always and in any form wrong, impure, craven? Consider the alternatives to the melting pot: Quebec, the Flemish and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French in Belgium. . . . A nation cannot survive without a common reference point for the loyalty and enthusiasm of its inhabitants. It is of the gravest consequence to lock children into "ethnic" alienation from a common culture. If our nation were to fragment into tribes, it would not survive. . . .

How much can one reasonably be expected to give up in the course of assimilating? . . . Did the Jews in Germany give up too much, too soon? Mr. Hamerow carefully allows the rather repellent Bleichröder and the tragic Walter Rathenau (he was to be assassinated) to speak for German Jews, but offers only a curt nod to Jewish "intellectuals, writers, musicians, artists, and actors," waiting in the wings, as if they had nothing to say to or about Jews. . . . Quite the contrary, German Jews invented the institutions that would make Jewish survival compatible with modernity. German-speaking Jews invented the modern synagogue, the rabbinical seminary, and the modern rabbi (a fact that some would hold against them), modern Jewish history, and modern Zionism. Among the "intellectuals" were not only Freud and Einstein, whose Jewishness was incidental and questionable, but Theodor Herzl, Max Nordau, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Heinrich Graetz, Leo Baeck. . . .

The ghetto and the *shul* and medieval Judaism were not abandoned out of some vile embarrassment by people ashamed to be Jewish, but because the compelling magnetism of a modern civilization open to Jews would not be denied. Rather than betraying their heritage, the Jews of Germany lived within a distinctly and proudly Jewish community whose institutions could and did hold their own in Gentile society, where Judaism was preserved in synagogues and schools and welfare and youth organizations, the same institutions by which Jews in America will survive—or not.

What we find so hard to forgive the German Jews is not that they assimilated, but that they assimilated to Germany. But how could they have known that Germany would become the embodiment of evil in the history of the world? . . .

WALTER SCHIMMERLING
Danville, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a German Jew, I read Theodore S. Hamerow's article with great interest—and almost no sense of recognition. . . .

Mr. Hamerow is so eager to build his case that he produces a picture of German Jewry that is glib to the point of flippancy. One of his worst omissions is his failure to say anything about the remarkable renascence of Jewish religious thought and activity that followed the emancipation of German Jews. . . . With the emancipation came the exploration of new religious forms and ideas—both Orthodox and Reform. Secular scholarship infused Torah study with new insights, and Judaism with new dynamics. How can anyone present a picture of German Jewry and fail to mention Samson Raphael Hirsch, Franz Rosenzweig, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Julius Guttmann, and dozens of other remarkable scholars whose massive body of work still makes up the core of any contemporary library of Judaica? . . .

Mr. Hamerow makes no distinction between acculturation and assimilation, and I suggest that this is why he is so puzzled by the revival of interest in German Jewry. . . .

As for Yiddish: Mr. Hamerow insists that German Jewry discarded it out of self-loathing assimilationism. . . . We were taught that Yiddish was the language of the ghetto, evolving from persecution. We were taught that Hebrew was the language of free Jews, and that for ease of communication one spoke the language of the land. . . .

No one denies that some German Jews assimilated to a fare-thee-well. . . . Nor can one doubt that some German Jews said bad things about *Ostjuden*. But having met assimilated Russian Jews who fled the Revolution, I know that assimilated *Ostjuden* also said nasty things about ghetto/*shtetl* Jews. Assimilated Jews are all pretty much alike, and not necessarily lovable.

What bothers me most about Mr. Hamerow's article, however, is his account of the German Jewish refugees in the U.S. None that I ever met . . . tried to hide his past, break with it, blot it out, or deny it. If anything, they leaned too hard on "with us, at home" nostalgia. I would not call *Der Aufbau* a mere newsletter, nor would I call the Leo Baeck Institute, on the one hand, or the many German Jewish congregations (notably K'hal Adath Jeshurun in Washington Heights), on the other, any part of a determination to forget. . . .

When the German Jewish refu-

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gees came to this country, they were met—by their fellow Jews—with indifference at best and hostility, resentment, and *Schadenfreude*, at worst. None of the welcoming gestures now extended to Russian Jewish émigrés was made to us. So we did not "adapt without difficulty." Not trusting my own memories as a pre-teen, I recently asked an older relative if her recollections were as dismal as mine; hers were worse. Having done next to nothing to save German Jewry from 1933 to 1942, American Jews were not happy to see us. . . .

C. PARENS
Constableville, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"Cravat Jews and Caftan Jews" is a scholarly presentation of great interest. However, I feel that Theodore S. Hamerow is suffering from a severe case of cultural blindness. He writes from the perspective of an assimilated Jew to whom the religious culture of Eastern Europe is completely alien.

As a first and minor point, Mr. Hamerow seems to be puzzled by the attraction of contemporary American Jews to the experience of German Jews, as contrasted with the unrealistic romanticizing of Eastern European Jewish culture. Yet this appears to me precisely what might be expected, since most American Jews are assimilated into the general culture in exactly the same manner as were the bulk of German Jews. It is to be expected that they would relate with a much greater degree of empathy to Jews so much like themselves, rather than to a culture which they view nostalgically, but with which they do not really identify.

When it comes to the legacy of the two groups of Jews, however, I believe that Mr. Hamerow has things completely reversed. Will anyone, either Jew or non-Jew, care a century from now about the fact that a particular scientific discovery or philosophical idea originated with someone who happened to be born a Jew? The contributions of the assimilated German Jews were as secular individuals to secular culture, and have no relation either to specifically Jewish concepts or even to the Jews as a people.

The Eastern European Jewish culture, which Mr. Hamerow dismisses as "largely forgotten," is actually the one that continues to live, regardless of the views of the assimilated majority of American Jews. It is true that Yiddish is now essentially a dead language, and that ideas such as Jewish national autonomy in Eastern Europe are subjects for the history books. Yet the great yeshivas of Eastern Europe continue to exist, both in Israel and in the United States, and continue to educate many of our youth. The works of the great rabbis of Eastern Europe continue not only to be studied, but to serve as guides for all observant Jews. The various groupings of Hasidism, which originated in Eastern Europe, not only continue to exist, but along with the yeshivas, extend their influence over the general Jewish community. The anecdote which Mr. Hamerow quotes regarding the child from Prague who became a Belzer Hasid could apply as well to a contemporary American Jewish family.

It seems evident that, contrary to the conclusion advanced by Mr. Hamerow, the contributions of the assimilated German Jews are destined to be considered as part of the accomplishments of German culture. However, the ideas, philosophy, and institutions of the traditional Eastern European Jews are those that will survive throughout the ages as a truly Jewish contribution.

IRWIN RUFF
Rockville, Maryland

THEODORE S. HAMEROW writes:

In talking about the differences between "cravat Jews" and "caftan Jews," I intended above all to describe and analyze two opposing perceptions of ethnic destiny. On the one hand, there was the policy of far-reaching assimilation pursued by the Jewry of Central Europe; on the other, the cultural and civic autonomism of the East European Jewish community. Though I suppose it is no secret where my own sympathies lie, it was not my purpose to extol one at the expense of the other. I have no wish to reprove

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the dead or sermonize the living. To be sure, it does seem to me that the stark juxtaposition of "cravat Jews" and "caftan Jews," which is at the core of Steven E. Aschheim's recent book, tends to distort rather than illuminate a complex historical process. But in no way did I seek to minimize the important contributions of the Jews of Central Europe to either German secular culture or Jewish religious thought. I do feel, nevertheless, that those contributions were often made at a considerable psychological and spiritual cost, namely, the suppression of a distinctive ethnic identity. Be that as it may, the vigor of the response to my article encourages me to believe that now, after the tragic destruction of Jewish communal life in both Eastern and Central Europe, we can examine its essential qualities more openly and critically. If what I had to say makes a modest contribution to such an examination, I am quite content.

Marx & Anti-Semitism

To the Editor of Commentary:

Paul Johnson's article, "Marxism vs. the Jews" [April], offers an excellent analysis of the fateful ambivalence of Marxism toward the Jewish question or, rather, the question of Jewishness and anti-Semitism. . . .

I would like to emphasize Mr. Johnson's accurate interpretation of the origins of Marxism precisely in the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory. . . . This is an embarrassing topic for many a Marxist zealot. I remember during my student years in Bucharest, Rumania, the clumsy and unconvincing arguments put forward by a professor of dialectical materialism and his desperate attempts to absolve Marx of this intolerable stigma. Paradoxically, the Jewish Marxist militants seemed to be the least interested in illuminating this substratum of their supposedly pristine faith. For Rosa Luxemburg and Georg Lukács . . . there was no trace of anti-Semitism involved in the Marxist design. The message of the prophet was one of universal emancipation and therefore could not entail any reductionist-particularistic approach.

Unfortunately, the historical experiments associated with the name of Karl Marx have not hesitated to capitalize on this persistent, though unavowed, dimension. In this respect, one should not underestimate the role of self-hating Jews—the non-Jewish Jews, as Mr. Johnson calls them—who were more than instrumental first in implementing the Leninist-Stalinist strategy and subsequently in the painful process of cultural-ideological *Gleichschaltung*. It is therefore a matter of melancholy reflection that this enduring misunderstanding engendered both the massive Jewish commitment to leftist causes and the Jews' predicament under the Stalinist and neo-Stalinist regimes.

In Stalin's paranoid imagination, the Jew was the conspirator *par excellence*; no one, notwithstanding previous revolutionary credentials, could escape the consequences of Stalin's anti-cosmopolitan campaigns. Trotsky, Kamenev, Radek, Slansky, and Anna Pauker could thus be suspected of trying to carry out the tasks dictated by the omnipotent "Grand Sanhedrin." The fate of the Revolution, which for Stalin and his epigones always meant the expansion of the Soviet empire, depended on the continuation of such exorcising rituals. . . . Would it be far-fetched to affirm that of all Marxist philosophical-economic texts, the most appealing for the prejudiced mind of the dull Communist *apparatchiks* remains Marx's young Hegelian essay, "On the Jewish Question"?

Vladimir Tismaneanu
Voorhees, New Jersey

To the Editor of Commentary:

I think Paul Johnson overstates the difference between the anti-Semitism of Marx and that of Hitler. It is true that the Jews did not occupy the same central position in Marx's demonology that they did in Hitler's. But Marx shared Hitler's romantic nationalism and xenophobia. Marx's newspaper, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, was an enthusiastic supporter of Prussian expansionism, and both the paper and Marx in his correspondence with Engels celebrated each new territorial gain with racial attacks on the victims. In 1867, for instance, Marx marked the annexation of Schleswig and Holstein by writing to Engels about the drunken and degenerate character of the Scandinavian people.

More interesting is the violently anti-Russian position of his paper: of all Marx's racial fixations, this was the most extreme. The Russians, he believed, were a hopelessly reactionary race who needed to be destroyed so that "their very name should be forgotten." In 1849, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* called for a German race war against Russia, to drive the Russians beyond the Ural mountains and provide the land for German settlement.

Once the pseudo-scientific jargon is stripped away, Marx's entire theory of ahistorical peoples and Oriental despotisms, and his conviction that only Germany, Britain, and America were prepared for revolution, becomes hard to distinguish from Hitler's notions of subhumans and of Aryan superiority. And of course the Nazis also claimed that their theories were scientific.

Arthur Lyons
Richmond, British Columbia

"Scientific American"

To the Editor of Commentary:

I was glad to discover from Jeffrey Marsh's "Politicizing Science" [May] that I was not alone in detecting the steady march toward political-adversary status of *Scientific American*. One disturbing feature of this decade-long trend toward producing anti-defense articles, in lock step with each trendy new topic of public protest as it comes to the top of the radical agenda, is that it has increased at the same time that other articles in *Scientific American* have decreased in their intelligibility and accessibility. So that now, despite the glossy art work, articles in *Scientific American* are little more digestible by the layman than reports in *Science*.

On the other hand, not to be outdone by the popular media, *Science* has taken on an even more overtly oppositional stance to the strengthening of national defense than *Scientific American*, to which it adds a reflexive skepticism about the views of any spokesman for the present administration, and a rudeness of tone that prevents it from referring to the President of the United States in any other terms than simply by his last name.

While *Scientific American* has the right to publish what it pleases and suffer the consequences in the marketplace of magazines as well as ideas, the performance of *Science* is a more serious matter. The devotion of large amounts of space to articles written by journalists, not

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scientists, attacking the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe, discussing the politics of nuclear power, casting doubt on State Department claims about "yellow rain," etc., is hard to explain in a journal meant, by the society that owns (and subsidizes) it—the American Association for the Advancement of Science—to be a vehicle for timely reports of scientific findings. The preoccupation with blackguarding the government is even more disturbing in light of the serious backlog of scientific papers by scientists shunted aside from week to week in order to publish the political opinions of journalists.

ALEXANDER ROSENBERG
Syracuse University
Syracuse, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"Politicizing Science" has been a long time coming. I thought I was the only one who believed *Scientific American* was politically oriented. . . . About four or five years ago I wrote to the magazine about its bias and pointed out that it was publishing political, not scientific, articles. The articles I cited were written by civilian "arms experts" and dealt with anti-submarine warfare and other weapons systems. Each article concluded that we should not pursue these systems, for to do so would "annoy" the Russians and whatever consequences ensued would be our fault. Never a word about the Russians "annoying" us and the consequences being their fault. Needless to say, my letter was never published.

I congratuate Mr. Marsh on his much-needed article. *Scientific American* might be a wonderful magazine in the sciences, but not in politics.

NORMAN KRUCHKOW
Stamford, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thank you for Jeffrey Marsh's excellent article on *Scientific American*. My father, a biochemist, has had a subscription to the magazine almost since the beginning of the Gerard Piel era, and the brilliant graphics attracted me long before I was able to have any real comprehension of the text. The magazine has great sentimental value for me because of the important role it played during my formative years. You can thus imagine my personal disappointment when the articles on the arms issue began appearing. Where there should have been rational, realistic thought I found instead unscientific appeasement ideology. Having access to classified material on the strategic-arms situation confirmed to me that many of the facts and suppositions these articles built on were way off-base. . . .

ALBERT S. ZELLER
San Francisco, California

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Comparable Worth: The Feminist Road to Socialism

Michael Levin

In December 1983, Federal Judge Jack Tanner accorded the fullest legal recognition it has so far received to the novel economic doctrine of "comparable worth." This doctrine holds that women in the work force are paid less than they are really "worth" in terms of the "value" of what they do. The recognition came in Judge Tanner's decision, in *American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees* [AFSCME] v. *Washington State*, that Washington owes 15,500 female state employees over four years' back pay and raises. Estimates of the cost of this judgment vary from $500 million to $1 billion. Whatever the eventual tally, Washington taxpayers will have to come up with it soon, as Judge Tanner has denied various motions by the state for time to accommodate its new burden. The case is currently under appeal to the Supreme Court, with the Reagan administration reluctant to side with Washington "against women" in an election year.

The history of *AFSCME* v. *Washington* reflects the development of the comparable-worth doctrine over the last decade, and illustrates as well the tactics on which comparable-worth advocates have come increasingly to rely. The idea itself has lately become the main item on the feminist agenda and has, moreover, been enshrined in the 1984 platform of the Democratic party. It is generally introduced with a statistic and a few examples intended to shock. One learns, first, that the average full-time working woman makes about sixty cents for every dollar earned by her full-time working male counterpart. To vivify the point, one may then be told that tree surgeons outearn librarians by several thousand dollars a year. As a sort of climax of unfairness, the advocacy literature of the National Organization of Office Workers (NOOW) stresses the case of a firm offering $745-1,090 per month for general clerks, who must analyze invoices and have "good telephone etiquette" and who are usually female, while offering $1,030-1,100 per month for shipping clerks, who need only write legibly and be able to "lift equipment in excess of 100 lbs." but who are usually male. It is presumed to be self-evident that the ability to talk on the telephone entitles one to more money than a strong back.

The big question is why women earn so little if the "human capital" they embody is so valuable and the jobs they do so important. The answers given by comparable-worth advocates may be ranked by the degree of conscious malevolence they attribute to employers. At one extreme stands the accusation that (male) employers actually conspire against women in order to reduce labor costs ("to maximize profits" is the preferred formulation). Thus, in 1980, the program director of NOOW assured the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that banks "colluded to hold down wages"; her evidence was that (a) bank presidents regularly met for lunch, and (b) men use "cultural stereotypes" when arguing with female union organizers. Such charges, however, are not taken very seriously even within comparable-worth circles, for wage-fixing cartels, quite apart from being illegal, would be vulnerable to raids by independent firms willing to pay more for talented females. Nor is it clear why employers willing and able to rig substandard wages for women would not also rig equally substandard wages for men.

The case for conspiracy being so flimsy, comparable-worth advocates prefer two other explanations of the wage gap. The first is the "herding" of women into a "pink-collar ghetto" of typically female jobs, which floods the market and depresses wages for these jobs. According to a study done for the Michigan Department of Labor:

> The reason for sex-related pay differentials [is] the traditional sex-segregation of most jobs. Under this hypothesis, the result of "crowding" of females into the clerical and service occupations is an oversupply of labor in these occupations, with resulting lower wages.

But this "hypothesis" rests most uneasily with charges of sexual discrimination, for it concedes that at bottom female wages are determined by the market forces of supply and demand. The

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more would-be secretaries there are, the less an employer must offer to get secretarial help—just as, conversely, the recent scarcity of nurses has driven up nursing salaries. Secretarial wages may be considered "discriminatory" and the supply of secretaries an oversupply only if "crowding" is not a metaphor but a literal description of employers forcing women into some jobs and barring them from others. The supposition that such practices exist is entirely implausible in light of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which explicitly forbid them; nor has any comparable-worth advocate produced a single instance of such activities occurring in the last decade. But as this citation from the Michigan Department of Labor suggests, one of the more ominous themes in the comparable-worth campaign is its implicit claim that the spontaneous social factors which affect women's vocational choices are themselves forms of discrimination calling for government correction.

Since the notion of "ghettoization" is so dangerously ambiguous, comparable-worth advocates add a final factor to explain the wage gap: the systematic undervaluing of women's work as part of society's overall disregard for women. Whereas classical economics says that in a free market the wages of all workers reflect their "marginal productivity," no matter what prejudices their employers may harbor, the comparable-worth case holds that market mechanisms "don't work" for women. In the words of *Women, Work, and Wages*, a report prepared in 1981 by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS):

> In many instances . . . jobs held mainly by women and minorities pay less at least in part *because* they are held mainly by women and minorities . . . the differentials in average pay for jobs held mainly by women and those held mainly by men persist when the characteristics of jobs thought to affect their value and the characteristics of workers thought to affect their productivity are held constant. [Emphasis added]

In a remarkable display of pseudo-rigor, the NAS even produced a mathematical "coefficient of discrimination" for calculating by how much the proportion of females in a job lowers its wages.

The tricky part, of course, is being sure one has identified *all* the "characteristics" that affect the wages for any particular job. In practice, this means hiring a team of "management experts," like Hays Associates or Norman Willis or the Arthur Young Co. (authors of the Michigan report), to make a determination. As one might expect, this also in practice inexorably links the question of what factors do determine wages to the quite separate question of what factors, in the opinion of management experts, *ought* to determine wages.

The experts typically resolve any given job into a few standard factors—skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions, or some variants thereof—and then assign a score to each factor. Jobs with equal point totals, when all dimensions are combined, are regarded as equally "valuable." The heart of the procedure—the assignment of points—is entirely subjective and universally admitted to be so by the firms that specialize in the practice. Nevertheless, it was in terms of such evaluation surveys that the NAS found women to be victims of wage discrimination.

THUS we arrive at the position of the state of Washington in the early 1970's when, heeding feminist imperatives, its governor commissioned the Willis firm to run a "point-factor analysis" of wage rates. Like most public employers, Washington at the time was compensating at the rates prevailing for the nearest corresponding jobs in the private sector. But when the first Willis survey found that predominantly female jobs (those done 70 percent or more by women) paid on average 20 percent less than jobs of the same "worth" done predominantly by men, the Washington Personnel Board resolved in 1976 to use the Willis analysis in setting wages. No steps, however, were taken in this direction, in part probably because of a memorandum cautioning that doing so would cost the state almost $65 million—in retrospect, a twentyfold underestimate. Eventually, it was not the results of the Willis survey *per se*, but Washington's failure to abide by studies it had commissioned and resolved to respect, that Judge Tanner used to sustain his finding of discrimination. Washington was hoist on the petard of its own impeccably progressive intentions.

It is vital to emphasize that equal pay for the *same* work was not at issue in the *AFSCME* suit and has not been an issue since the passage of the 1963 Equal Pay Act. Moreover, there is not a single sentence in the U.S. Code or anywhere else to give comparable worth any statutory basis whatever. What enabled AFSCME to bring its suit in the first place was the Supreme Court's 1981 ruling in *Gunther* v. *Washington* that litigants have a right to test the comparable-worth concept in federal court under the rubric of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. (*Gunther* concerned female prison guards of female prisoners, who claimed that their work was as valuable as that done by better-paid male guards of male prisoners in higher security prisons.) *AFSCME* was simply the first droplet in the flood of litigation released by *Gunther*.

It is true that neither of these two key comparable-worth decisions directly endorses comparable worth, nor is either a bolt from the federal blue into the wage policies of localities or industry. At the same time, however, it would be naive not to expect *AFSCME* to be replayed in the near future. Over a dozen states have undertaken comparable-worth studies of their own work forces, and there is agitation for such studies in virtually every oth-

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er state and in hundreds of municipalities. These studies are invariably accompanied by disclaimers of legislative intent—"Let's simply see if our state is perpetuating discrimination"—but *AFSCME* is an obvious basis for legal action once these studies uncover wage discrimination, as they always seem to do.

To this commotion may be added the 1982 endorsement by the leadership of the Democratic party of "equal pay for work of comparable social value,"* a doctrine even more radical than "equal pay for work of comparable economic value." Walter Mondale is on record as supporting "equal pay for comparable *effort*," more radical still. Congress has held hearings on the issue. Comparable-worth advocates are predictably eager to impose it on the private sector; such is the stated position of the New York *Times*. An advocate of comparable worth has argued that women who occupy "traditionally segregated jobs" have a prima-facie case for wage discrimination, with the burden of disproof falling on the employer†—an impossible burden to discharge since "wage discrimination" was unheard of until recently, and so no employer could have acted affirmatively to prevent it. Clearly, comparable worth has followed some other notable ideas from the feminist agenda onto the national agenda.

II

Is it true that discrimination explains why women earn less than men? The National Academy of Sciences concluded from its survey of the statistical literature that "differences in education, labor-force experience, labor-force commitment, or other human-capital factors believed to contribute to productivity" could explain, at most, half the wage gap. It would seem evident that the failure to explain the wage gap by a given set of variables is consistent with the operation of undiscovered variables having nothing to do with discrimination. Yet comparable-worth advocates have managed to obscure this point by expeditious wordplay. In the jargon of the moment, they conceive discrimination as a "residual." This means that certain variables are selected *a priori* as relevant to wages, and discrimination is then defined as what these variables cannot explain.

In the last two decades the traditional test for discrimination—"intent"—has yielded to the much more dubious test of "effects," but the "residue" test goes beyond even "effects." Stigmatizing a practice as "discriminatory in effect" requires at least that one identify some specific human activity and show that it has some definite effect on the sexes. The "residue" test is uncontrolled, conflating as discriminatory all situations in which gender differences are observed, possibly including those caused by subtle innate biological sex differences.

The NAS states:

> The burden should rest on the designer of the job-evaluation system to identify and explicitly incorporate all factors regarded as legitimate components of pay differences between men and women, not merely to assert the possibility that including unspecified and unmeasured factors or improving the measurement of existing factors could reduce the "discrimination" coefficient.

In English, this means identifying discrimination with the wage gap itself, since in practice all "unmeasured factors" are assumed irrelevant. By fiat, then, the NAS is able to dismiss such factors as differences in drive and family sex roles as imaginary.

Thus, none of the studies surveyed by the NAS properly controlled for so obvious a variable as marital status: the wages of *never-married* women with full-time, continuous labor-force participation are virtually the same as those of the average married full-time working male. Women earn less than men, it seems, because they want jobs permitting easy exit from and reentry into the labor force, preferences which flow in turn from the average married woman's perception of her family as being her primary responsibility, especially when her children are young. Men, on the other hand, see themselves as breadwinners, whose obligation to make money increases as children come along. Perhaps a further factor will prove to be the male's amply-documented greater innate competitiveness, his tendency to do whatever is necessary to ascend hierarchies, including the hierarchies of modern business organizations.

Would it exonerate all concerned of the charge of wage discrimination if the wage gap turned out to be due to differences in family sex roles? Not at all; these basic differences between men and women simply become further injustices:

> Criticizing women for "lower labor force participation rates than men, moving in and out of the labor force more frequently than men, and being more likely than men to be seeking part-time work only" fails to take certain fundamental facts into account. For instance, among *Fortune* 500 executives, who is taking care of the children? Whose responsibility is it to juggle career demands with child-bearing and child-caring? Did it ever occur to you that the reason women seem less committed to careers is that they don't have the luxury of a wife to take care of home and children while they blaze their career paths?**

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* *Rebuilding the Road to Opportunity*, Report of the Democratic Caucus, U.S. House of Representatives, September 1982.

† Sheila Blumrosen, "Wage Discrimination, Job Segregation, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform*, 1979.

** Letter from Susan Sharp of Sharp and Co. to *Fortune*, September 6, 1982.

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This rage at all difference in the basic social role of the sexes underlies the campaign for comparable worth.

III

Critics of comparable worth understandably concentrate on the biases inherent in any list of factors "deserving" compensation. For instance, all job-evaluation systems I have seen assume that a college degree enhances a worker's "intrinsic value," a bit of snobbery which shows only that the people who design evaluation systems have all been to college. Yet this is not what is fundamentally wrong with comparable worth. For while the range of objective judgments about "training" or "responsibility" is far too narrow to support sweeping doctrines like comparable worth, such judgments can nonetheless be made. Planning shuttle missions in space plainly carries greater responsibility in terms of lives and hardware than does teaching philosophy. And planning space missions is plainly harder than adding up columns of figures, if only because the latter skill is just one part of the former.

For the sake of argument, then, let us assume a skill which is objectively difficult and reflects much objectively measurable training on the part of its practitioner; but let us also suppose it is a skill no one is interested in. Consider a person who is adept at throwing arrows into the air and catching them with his teeth. This is extremely difficult to do, and takes endless practice. Basketball players earning six-figure salaries do nothing so demanding. Unhappily, nobody wants to hire our man to catch arrows. He must eke out a living as a street entertainer. Is he somehow being denied his intrinsic worth by passers-by who flip him quarters? Does a circus scout who offers him a pittance for his act undershoot what the knack entitles him to? The answers would seem to be no. Intrinsic moral and aesthetic merit aside, the skill is economically worthless—unable to command other goods and services—if no one will pay for it. Only someone willing to trade something for the service in question can confer economic worth on it.

Money itself is merely the conventional measure of the capacity of a thing to prompt people to exchange their own goods for it. A thing's price summarizes the ebb and flow of its performance in exchange, and has no independent meaning. And here is the intellectual black hole at the center of comparable worth: there is no such thing as intrinsic economic value. It is a chimera. Conversely, the willingness to supplant the market price of labor or anything else means the willingness to override the liberty of exchange, association, and contract expressed by market prices. In each particular comparable-worth proposal, the question is only one of determining where freedom is to be suppressed.

This crucial point is easy enough to see in connection with material objects. It would be absurd to maintain that copper deserves to cost more than gold because it conducts electricity better; gold and copper, absent people's actual desires for them, would just be stuff in the ground. The point is also reasonably clear where the "just price" of money—i.e., permissible interest rates—is concerned. But the market determination of wages meets much greater resistance, perhaps because it puts our value so squarely in the eyes of our beholders.

The example of the arrow-catcher may be dismissed as a contrivance. Contrived it is, which proves its point. The skill seems freakish, worthless, precisely because no one has ever valued it or is ever likely to do so. Our very perception of skillfulness, in other words, is determined by the market. The ability to draw, or set bones, or fix automobiles, seems "naturally" compensable because we are used to there being a market for such skills. But the once "naturally" compensable ability to make buggy whips does not seem so today, when people no longer want buggy whips.

A long line of thinkers, extending back through Marx to Ricardo, has attempted, and failed, to devise non-market criteria of economic value for labor; almost every proposal in this tradition can be found in the comparable-worth literature. The straight Marxist appeal to the "social value" of work founders on the need to specify "social value." If something is "socially valuable" just because a great many people are willing to pay top dollar for it, we are back to the market; and there is no other way to tell that society wants something than its willingness to try hard to get it.

A more frequent proposal equates the value of a job with its contribution to the employer's profit. We may overlook the obvious difficulty: that this would make wages fluctuate wildly with exogenous factors—think of proofreaders becoming superfluous when a publisher's profits are due to a single best-seller. Let us, instead, consider wage rates. Classical economics holds that each employee tends to get his marginal return on his product as he bargains omnisciently with his employers: If Jones's labor is worth $20 to Smith, Jones can return Smith's wage offer of $15 with a counterdemand for $16, which is still attractive to Smith. But then Jones can hold out for $17, $19, $19.50 . . . until Smith must agree to pay the full $20. But in this case the market itself already bestows a contribution to profit. In reality, of course, the employer must retain some portion of his employee's product if he is to have any reason for hiring him. But then, the contribution criterion means deciding what portion of a businessman's profit he "deserves" to keep, an entirely arbitrary decision.

Now, if one assumes that males get the "right"

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return on their product while females don't, it might seem fairer and simpler to give each worker in a firm the *same* return on his product, without having to decide on a proper rate of return. A secretary, say, would be entitled to 90 percent of her product if holders of benchmark jobs like engineers got 90 percent of theirs. But benchmark figures must be determined independently, which means by the market. A firm finds that to secure the labor of scarce engineers it must pay what amounts to 90 percent of what they earn for the firm. But if so, what fairness requires is not that the return for secretaries be proportionate to that for engineers, but that it be determined *in the same way*—which is to say, by the market. Making the availability of engineers a factor in compensating secretaries is neither equitable nor rational.

What lends an air of unreality to every version of the "contribution to profit" theory is the fact that each of several jobs may be necessary for a firm's profitability. Since it is logically impossible to give all the profits to each of several job categories, what does and must happen in the real world, in which a firm would be paralyzed both without secretaries and without engineers, is recruitment of secretaries and engineers at market wages, the wages they all agree to accept. As the English economist Thomas Hodgskin wrote, there is no "principle or rule . . . for dividing the produce of joint labor among different individuals who concur in the producing, but the judgment of individuals themselves"

A cognate difficulty undermines the related test of basing a job's wages on its contribution to the "organization's objectives," to quote the Michigan comparable-worth study. This is a measure often suggested for non-market organizations like universities, governments, and foundations. Yet the achievement of non-monetary goals also requires the cooperation of many people whose contributions cannot be isolated *a priori*. Furthermore, to compete with profit-seeking organizations in attracting a sufficiently talented work force, nonprofit organizations must in any case heed market decrees about wages. Moreover, determining some government post's contribution to the "overall objectives" of government presupposes clarity about what the "overall objectives" of government are, a goal that has eluded political philosophers for some centuries. If government has accommodated comparable worth more readily than private organizations, this is not because governments have found comparable worth easier to construe; governments can finance their follies by taxation, with no worries about buyer loyalty.

Finally, comparable-worth criteria that stress job characteristics like working conditions face all the problems that beset the use of traits like skill. Collecting refuse may be "unpleasant," but it is pleasant enough to attract applicants at the going rate. We do not need elaborate analysis to see that the market wage adequately compensates refuse collectors for the unpleasantness they endure. And, again, our very perception of this circumstance is a response to the market. Most American farm workers would find intolerable the backbreaking chores that constituted farming a millennium ago.

Skill, effort, and training do play a role in determining pay. Someone who has invested much time preparing for a hard job will drive a hard bargain. More importantly, the harder a job and the training for it, the fewer candidates there will be, driving up wages still further. This naturally high correlation among difficulty, training, and salary explains the feeling that demanding jobs "deserve" higher pay. In the end, however, these factors raise wages only by influencing the choices of bargainers.

IV

Appeal to the free market may appear slightly musty in these days of the minimum wage, banking regulation, the National Labor Relations Act, and cancer warnings on cigarettes. Yet these familiar measures are modifications of laissez faire, while the rationale and scope of comparable worth make it a frontal assault on *any* form of economic liberty.

To begin with, none of the extant labor laws is based on a non-market notion of value. The minimum wage was intended to insure everyone a "decent" wage, without pretense that every worker's output is "really" worth $3.35 an hour. The National Labor Relations Act banned "anti-union animus" on the part of management not because collectively negotiated wages were thought to reflect value more accurately, but to secure "labor peace." And, while the minimum wage truncates the range of possible bargains, and the National Labor Relations Act affects a wide range of negotiations, both measures still permit very extensive play to market forces. Unionized plumbers may not get strict market wages, but their wages approximate market value.

Overall, the many regulations that control banking, trucking, the airlines, mergers, work-place safety, and the like are (a) industry-specific or activity-specific, and (b) intended, rightly or wrongly, to preserve the free market against its own excesses. Wage and price controls, when imposed, are usually justified as "temporary measures" to curb inflation. Even socialism itself was originally conceived as a way of harnessing in a more efficient way the productive capacity generated by capitalism. Because "New Deal"-type regulations thus purport to secure specific results, they imply built-in tests to which they can be held. A ceiling on bank interest rates is supposed to help Savings and Loan Associations, so if S & L's keep failing at the same rate after the ceiling is in place, the ceiling has not worked.

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Comparable worth, by contrast, contains none of these self-limitations. Its scope includes every job in the work force; and since most jobs are "sex-segregated," most pay scales would be open to challenge. Nor does comparable worth pretend to facilitate the best tendencies of the free market; rather, it is explicit about seeking to flout the market. It does this, moreover, without a clear specification of what positive goal is to be achieved beyond "justice"; under this mantle, the pursuit of comparable worth can discount any economic havoc it wreaks as irrelevant to its "success." (A similar criterion now governs assessment of affirmative action, deemed "successful" if it increases the number of women and minorities in well-paying positions, no matter the cost in fairness or efficiency of putting them there.) Penn Kemble has called comparable worth "a feminist road to socialism";* if so, it is socialism without a plan.

It is instructive to reflect that comparable worth can never come about through voluntary agreement. If a firm can get secretaries at a market-clearing wage, so can its competitors. Were it to raise its secretarial wages for ethical reasons, its labor costs would rise without any gain in productivity, its products would cost more than those of its competitors, and it would slide into failure. Comparable worth presents what economists call a "coordination problem": it must be introduced all at once, or not at all. Needless to say, the favored agency for solving coordination problems is the government.

THE central point is this: whether or not the marketplace offers an appropriate ideal of justice, wages will in fact tend to be set at their market value so long as people retain anything like their accustomed economic liberty. The only alternative to the market is systematic state control. Comparable worth can be implemented only by endless government intervention, in the words of a pre-*Gunther* federal court, "pregnant with the possibility of disrupting the entire economic system of America."

For if "wage discrimination" is the wage gap itself, whatever its causes, nothing less than the elimination of the gap will be allowed to count as ending discrimination. To grasp what this would mean, consider that in 1983 there were 49 million full-time working men whose median income was $20,683, and 31 million full-time working women, median income $12,172. To close the wage gap, employers would have had to pay each woman $8,500 more, or about $250 billion, or—in still other terms—about 15 percent of total wages paid in 1983. These costs would no doubt have been passed on to consumers as higher prices, and as higher taxes to finance government services.

One might think the gap could be closed more slowly by freezing or slowing the growth of men's salaries until women's salaries grew to parity. This is now the policy in San Jose, California, where the city government worked out a comparable-worth agreement with AFSCME. It seems unlikely, however, that men or their unions would tolerate this arrangement on a wide scale. A man who, thanks to comparable worth, gets a smaller raise than he would have otherwise gotten has, so far as he is concerned, suffered a pay cut. Comparable worth is advertised as a boon for working women struggling to help their families with a second income, but it does not help a family to hold down the husband's wages so the wife's can be artificially boosted. On balance, the likeliest short-term effect of comparable worth would be to boost everyone's wages, thereby flooding the market with new money in the absence of new goods—the standard recipe for inflation. And this might be the occasion for the government to begin coordinating wage policy to assure the proper closure of the wage gap.

The longer-run consequence of inflating female salaries and holding down male salaries in defiance of the market would be a massive disincentive to work. Women would already be getting more without having to work harder, and men would not be permitted to get more even if they did work harder. Why, then, should anyone work harder? Nor would the work force become more "integrated," since women would have no incentive to leave "women's work" once it paid as much as less pleasant "masculine" work. If anything, men would try to invade the newly well-paid female sphere. And at the same time men were queuing up for the typing pool, there would be no reason for a man to undertake an unpleasant job like collecting refuse if high wages for it were no longer available as an inducement—so we would almost certainly see critical job shortages. Add to this the undoubted persistence of a quota system which would prevent management from firing women to make room for (possibly more desirable) men, and a crisis of extreme proportions would be upon us. If recent history teaches us anything, it is that governments meet crises of their own making with more of the coercive rules that created the crisis in the first place.

V

IT IS not surprising that a society which has absorbed busing, quotas, *Miranda*, and publicly funded abortion should look on comparable worth with numb bemusement. One can almost sympathize with a businessman happy to reach the end of a profitable quarter without some new horror from the Federal Register landing on him. It is disheartening nonetheless that the American Compensation Association should summarize the attitude of the business community toward comparable worth in these words: "Plan-

* "A New Direction for the Democrats?," COMMENTARY, October 1982.

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ning for the inevitable appears to be the appropriate response."* Like such otherwise perceptive commentators as John Bunzel (who sees comparable worth as part of the "revolution of rising entitlements"), the ACA has missed the distinctive element in the comparable-worth campaign.

Feminists realize at some level that men and women view work differently—but they believe that this should not be, and, as do all those who wish people were other than they are, feminists want the government to correct the situation. Inverting cause and effect, they ask the government to curb one manifestation of sex differentiation. The real enemy feminism has targeted, however, is not some isolable inequity in the wage system but the family and the rest of the malign "social conditioning" which make men and women act differently, in the economy and elsewhere.

That is why one must view with mixed feelings those critics of the comparable-worth idea who fall in with the "social-conditioning" theory. Lee Smith writes that "in large part, the [wage] disparity stems from traditions and prejudices that have channeled women into low-paying jobs." Bunzel conjectures that "greater interests and responsibilities in the home" may explain the number of women in low-paying jobs, but that this may "reflect socialization toward traditional roles that, for many women, begins in childhood." Cotton Mather Lindsay, the least compromising critic of comparable worth, cites as the most important factor limiting women's access to high-paying occupations "the subtle socialization process beginning in childhood, which orients women toward domestic careers." Even John Warehman, who bluntly asserts that "women lack the necessary emotional strength to achieve executive success," says "women's 'emotional deficiencies' spring from patterns of dependency established during their childhood." These writers treat the origin of this socialization itself as a mystery.

Economists may be forgiven for not knowing that research on sex differences shows these different social roles to be innate, or so close to innate as to be uneliminable features of every human society—but when they reject comparable worth only because it penalizes employers who "had nothing to do with producing . . . female inhibitions" (in the words of Carl Hoffman, who has conducted much research on male and female motivation in the business world), they abet the most irresponsible feminist tendencies. If an adolescent girl's "socialization" really forced her to choose low-paying nursing over high-paying surgery, she may not have been cheated by her employer but she has certainly been deprived. Wouldn't it be well to change custom and tradition so that little girls were raised to be prepared emotionally for becoming surgeons? And isn't the state allowed to do a little of the altering for the general good? Thus is the state given a blank check for the sort of intrusion of which comparable worth is an extreme instance.

Prophesying the end of the free market is a sure way to be labeled a crank. On the other hand, I am not encouraged by confident assurances that the free market can survive anything. Howard Ruff, in one of his cheerfully apocalyptic guides to the future, compares the free market to Rasputin. Rasputin was poisoned, and he was shot, and still he survived. So, writes Ruff, the regulators have done everything to American capitalism, and still it survives. Unfortunately, Ruff overlooks a final detail. Eventually, Rasputin's tormentors threw him in the river. That killed him.

* "Comparable Worth . . . A Few Thoughts on the Issue," *ACA News*, February 1984.

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Beirut & the Great Media Cover-Up

Ze'ev Chafets

On April 23, 1981, hundreds of Syria's elite special forces gathered in designated meeting places near the northern city of Hama. They were led by Syrian President Hafez Assad's brother, Rifaat Assad, and they had come for a simple purpose—to teach the citizens of Hama a lesson. For more than two years, the Assad government had been plagued with civil unrest and political dissent. Syrian military installations had been sabotaged, government buildings attacked, and even the president himself was no longer safe. The source of this turmoil was the mysterious Muslim Brotherhood, an organization of fanatical Sunni Muslims dedicated to the overthrow of the government. No one knew precisely where the Brotherhood was headquartered, but the city of Hama was widely considered one of its strongholds. The Assad brothers decided that the time had come to give its people a demonstration of good citizenship, Syrian-style.

Just before midnight, the troops were given the order to move. They streamed into the town and cut off several neighborhoods where Brotherhood sympathizers were believed to live. Then they systematically dragged hundreds of civilians, many of them teenagers, from their beds, lined them up against the walls of their own houses, and machine-gunned them to death. At first they left the bodies bleeding in the streets, for the edification of the townspeople; later, municipal garbage trucks scooped up the corpses and dumped them into open ditches. No official death toll was published, of course, but later estimates put the number as high as 350.

Readers who have never heard of this massacre (or who may have confused it with another, much greater massacre that took place in Hama in February 1982 and that claimed as many as 20,000 victims) are in good company. The foreign editors of most of America's newspapers have never heard of it, either. In fact, just about the only Americans who are aware of the slaughter are those who happened to read about it in an article on an inside page of the Washington *Post* two months later. There, under the headline "Syrian Troops Massacre Scores of Assad's Foes," the *Post*'s Edward Cody, writing from Washington, told the story. Cody, one of America's most experienced Middle East reporters, noted that the first report on the massacre had been published in the French daily *Le Monde* on May 13, 1981, and that the *Post* had delayed its own article until it had been able to gain independent confirmation.

The Washington *Post*'s report was a considerable achievement—an American exclusive on a major political event in an important Middle East country. But why, with so many foreign correspondents in Beirut, all of them assigned to the Syrian beat, did it take two months for the story to emerge? And why did other news organizations —the New York *Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the three networks, to name only some—never report it at all? In the seventh paragraph of his story, Cody gave a diplomatic answer:

> The massacre reports, in trustworthy and untrustworthy variations, have been discussed in Damascus and Beirut in the last two months. In an atmosphere created by the wounding of Reuters correspondent Berndt Debusmann, shot in the back by a gunman firing a silencer-equipped pistol, and threats against British Broadcasting Corp. correspondent Tim Llewellyn—both after stories considered by Damascus as unfriendly to Syria—the Hama reports have not been widely published from the area.

Cody's meaning was unmistakable—the reporters stationed in Beirut must have heard the story circulating there and had chosen to ignore it. They had remained silent in response to recent Syrian violence against journalists. They had, in short, decided to censor themselves.

II

It is hard to blame the correspondents in Beirut for being cautious. Muslim West Beirut, where most of them lived and worked, had been a battlefield since the onset of the Lebanese civil war in 1975-76. Following the intervention of Syria in the summer of 1976, the city and much of Lebanon came under military occupation and Beirut became an urban night-

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mare of random violence, terrorism, and repression.

It had not always been that way. In the 1960's and early 70's, before the PLO arrived in Lebanon, destroyed the country's political and social equilibrium, and plunged it into chaos, Beirut had been one of the most sophisticated cities in the Middle East, a city where the old colonial French influence was still strong and which, in contrast to the closed societies of the Arab world, was an oasis of tolerance and of what one American correspondent, John Cooley of the *Christian Science Monitor*, described as a "free and easy" press.

Then, in 1970, the PLO, whose armed presence in the kingdom of Jordan had already become an acute threat to the government there, lost a bloody war against King Hussein's troops. In the months following, almost the entire leadership structure of the PLO fled Jordan and relocated in Beirut, where it brought its armed militant presence to bear on the side of the Lebanese Muslims, much to the displeasure of the dominant middle-class Christians. It also brought a method for dealing with Western journalists that was both direct and brutal.

In those early days foreign reporters were considered enemies of the PLO unless proved otherwise; and certain subjects were off-limits to all journalists, friends and enemies alike. This approach actually began during the period that the PLO was still headquartered in Amman. In the late 60's, Milan Kubic, who covered the Middle East for *Newsweek*, filed a report about the PLO's contacts with European terrorist organizations. When it appeared, he was informed that an official of the PLO wanted to meet with him. He was taken to the office of the PLO's chief spokesman in Amman, where his life was threatened. On leaving Jordan, Kubic hired two part-time correspondents to "report" on the PLO, one the son of the legendary British leader of the Jordanian army, Glubb Pasha, the other Mark (Abdullah) Schleifer, a Jewish convert to Islam and an anti-Israel propagandist. Both were, presumably, closer to what the PLO had in mind.

After its exodus from Jordan, the PLO began expanding its power in Lebanon. Its base was the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arab refugees in the country, and it joined forces with radical Muslim groups in a rough alliance against the Christians. By 1973, there was sporadic violence throughout the country, and in the spring of 1975, full-scale civil war erupted. The small community of foreign journalists in Lebanon was reinforced to cover the fighting. The PLO was particularly sensitive to the fact that its policies and methods were now under the scrutiny of a comparatively large group of Western reporters, and it undertook some of the same tactics that it had employed in Jordan in order to insure that its "enemies" in the Western press remained at arm's length.

One such, ironically, was William Marmon of *Time*, whose Middle East tour had begun in 1973 when he became *Time*'s bureau chief in Israel. He soon established himself as one of the journalists most critical of Israel and sympathetic to the Palestinian Arab cause. His wife had a job teaching at Beir Zeit, the Palestinian-Arab college on the West Bank that was a hotbed of anti-Israel sentiment. All this, he assumed, would stand him in good stead when, in 1975, *Time*—which was itself in the process of adopting a position more sympathetic to the Arabs—transferred him from Jerusalem to Beirut.

He was wrong. During the summer of 1975 Lebanese security officers came to Marmon's office and told his local assistant, Abu Said, that Palestinian intelligence had learned about Marmon's Jerusalem years and was planning to kill him. Abu Said, himself a Palestinian Arab, learned that the threat had come from the PFLP faction of the PLO. Marmon contacted the American embassy in Beirut; he was told that although there was no information regarding this particular threat, the embassy's policy was to take these matters very seriously.

Marmon decided to stay on in Beirut. He sent Abu Said to mediate, and his assistant was apparently able to convince the Palestinian terrorists to drop the threat. The correspondent remained in Beirut throughout the fall of 1975, a period in which *Time*'s office was shelled and the civilian slaughter in the city was, in Marmon's words, "the worst I have ever seen." On New Year's Eve, Abu Said came to see him. He had word that PLO gunmen had been looking for Marmon the night before but had gone to the wrong apartment. This time the message got through. Marmon took the first flight out, and never again returned to an area under the control of the PLO. Even today he does not know how his name got on the enemies' list.

Another member of the American press who ran afoul of the PLO in 1975 was Philip Caputo, a former Marine officer in Vietnam and future novelist, then the Beirut correspondent of the Chicago *Tribune*. He had already had a run-in with the PLO two years earlier, when he had been detained in Beirut on charges of "spying" and held for five days. Upon his release, he had written an emotional account of his ordeal for the *Tribune*. As often happens with the PLO, Caputo had received profuse apologies from the organization when, after scaring him out of his wits, it finally released him.

But Caputo's problems with Beirut's armed thugs were not over. On October 26, 1975, he filed a report to the *Tribune*, and left his office. He had not gone far when he was stopped at a checkpoint by "leftist militiamen." As Caputo later described the incident:

> They checked my credentials and told me to walk down to Hamra Street, a distance of about one hundred yards. I had gone about thirty

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yards when one of them fired a shot at me. I shouted at them to stop, but then another joined in and fired a burst of bullets, one of which literally went through my hair. I ran zigzagging and rolling low, and was grazed across the back and arms by flying bullets. Then one hit me in the right ankle and just as I reached the corner another one got me in the left ankle. I crawled down Hamra Street toward the Central Bank and a householder took me in.

Caputo was taken in an armored car to a nearby hospital; later, he was evacuated to the United States. When the Chicago *Tribune* reopened its Middle East office, it was in Tel Aviv.

By the summer of 1976 Beirut had become, in the words of James Markham of the New York *Times*, "the most savage and uncivilized place on earth." Tens of thousands of civilians had already died in the fighting and the Muslim-PLO alliance seemed to be winning. It was then, at the ostensible invitation of the hapless and almost fictional Lebanese government, that Syrian forces entered the country and began to intervene on the side of the Christians. The press corps now had a new threat to contend with.

III

SYRIA's first move against the press in Beirut was directed at the local Lebanese media, and it was carried out with the cooperation of the Lebanese government. On January 4, 1977, the government imposed a state of national emergency, and with it, new and, for Lebanon, unprecedented curbs on freedom of expression, including a ban on the right of assembly and the institution of press censorship. Syrian forces also shut down seven local newspapers, including the relatively independent *al-Nahar*, through the simple expedient of seizing printing presses and locking employees out of the buildings.

By 1978, the Syrian occupation was a fact of life, and Beirut was totally divided between Christian East and Muslim West. Syria abandoned its alliance with the Christian forces; Damascus was now cooperating with the PLO, and together they controlled West Beirut. Armed "fighters," some of them not more than fifteen or sixteen years old, roamed the streets, brandishing Russian-made assault rifles. Almost every journalist stationed in Beirut had had a close scrape or two.

During these years, Syrian pressure on the local press waxed and waned as circumstances dictated, but in 1980 it hit a high point with the murders of Salim Lawzi and Riad Taha. Lawzi, a Sunni Muslim who during the 1970's had built a reputation as a moderate and thoughtful journalist, as well as a fierce antagonist of the Assad regime, had moved his journal *al-Hawadess* (*Events*) to London in 1977. In Lebanon for his mother's funeral in February 1980, Lawzi was kidnapped. On March 6, 1980, the New York *Times* reported:

> The tortured body of one of the Arab world's most influential editors, who had been kidnapped by unidentified gunmen ten days ago, was discovered by a shepherd in a wooded area near here last night. . . .
>
> Mr. Lawzi had been critical of the leadership of a number of Arab countries, notably Syria and Libya. . . .

The *Times* article cautiously refrained from speculating on the identity of the "gunmen" who had abducted and mutilated Lawzi, but at the bar of the Commodore Hotel, the foreign-correspondents' gathering place in Beirut, various theories, most of them related to the dread hit teams of Rifaat Assad, were propounded. Needless to say, the murderers were never caught.

On July 23, 1980, Beirut was shocked once again to learn of the assassination of Riad Taha, the long-time president of the Lebanese publishers association. Despite the fact that the assassination had taken place in broad daylight, the police were, as usual, unable to find any clue regarding the identity of the murderers, who were rumored to be terrorists working for the Iraqis or the Syrians. That same day Charles Rizk, the Christian head of Lebanese television, resigned his post after having been kidnapped and held for four hours by "unidentified gunmen," and the publisher and editor of *al-Nahar* fled Beirut. The terror had become an epidemic.

WITH the Lebanese press largely frightened into silence, the Syrians turned their attention to the remaining independent journalists in West Beirut—the foreign press corps. Syria itself was in the throes of a brutal crackdown on dissent; thousands of Syrian civilians were being arrested and hundreds murdered. The regime in Damascus totally controlled the news within the country, and by carefully monitoring the entry of foreign correspondents, it tried to keep word of its bloody reprisals from reaching the outside world. But Beirut, as a listening post next to Syria, was a threat. Enemies of the Assad regime smuggled out information to foreign reporters, who in turn published it and even beamed it back to Syria via the BBC or Voice of America.

In the spring of 1980, the unrest in Syria was reaching a peak. Most correspondents, unable to get an eyewitness view of the fighting, were forced to rely on secondhand accounts and diplomatic leaks. Somehow Berndt Debusmann, Beirut bureau chief for Reuters, got hold of information about a near-insurrection against the Assad regime in the northern port city of Latakia, and got it published. On June 5, Debusmann and his wife were leaving a dinner party at the home of a fellow correspondent in West Beirut shortly after midnight. As they were getting into their car, another automobile with several men in it pulled up; they fired five shots with silenced pistols and then sped away. Debusmann, shot in the back,

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was rushed to the American University hospital. Later, he was transferred to a hospital in Cyprus and subsequently relocated by Reuters.

The attempted murder of Debusmann did not come as a complete surprise. After his reports on Assad's difficulties had begun to appear, Debusmann was visited by an officer of the Lebanese security police, which under the Syrian occupation was a toothless but sometimes well-informed organization. According to the British *Observer*, Debusmann was warned that two armed Syrians were looking for him. This incident was followed by repeated telephone calls to the Reuters office in Beirut attempting to ascertain Debusmann's whereabouts and on one occasion a visit to the office by a Syrian "journalist" who asked for a recent photo. Friends advised Debusmann to leave Beirut, but he refused.

Following the incident, Reuters sent out a story that stated, "There was no known reason for the shooting." Reuters, which must have known about the repeated Syrian threats to Debusmann, chose to cover them up. But Debusmann's colleagues in Beirut and throughout the Middle East were perfectly aware of the facts.

The party Debusmann had been attending on the night he was shot was held at the home of BBC correspondent Tim Llewelyn. It was the last one that Llewelyn ever gave there. For the BBC correspondent, who had watched the shooting of Berndt Debusmann from his upstairs balcony, would within weeks himself be forced to flee from Beirut ahead of the Syrian assassins.

The threats against Llewelyn and his backup correspondent, Jim Muir, came after they had persistently reported on internal unrest in Syria. In July 1980 a Syrian go-between informed several diplomats in Damascus that Llewelyn and Muir were going to be killed, and they passed the message along. The British embassy protested to the Syrian authorities but was told, with what the British *Economist* described as "laughable cynicism," that security in Beirut was the responsibility of the Lebanese government. That was enough. Llewelyn and Muir sought refuge in Cyprus, where they waited for several weeks while the BBC reportedly tried to negotiate the terms of their return to Lebanon. It was a lost cause. Llewelyn, like Debusmann, was reassigned to East Africa. Muir remained in Nicosia. And the BBC's new Middle East correspondent, Gordon Leach, took up residence in Cyprus. The BBC's Beirut operation had been closed down.

The reign of terror did not end there. Later that month, *Figaro* correspondent Jorg M. Stocklin was, in the words of New York *Times* Beirut correspondent John Kifner, "suddenly pulled out [of Lebanon], and word about town was that he, too, had received a warning from the Syrians."

Reporters in Beirut clearly recognized the organized, explicit threat posed by the Syrian government, but they found it difficult to respond directly. In the summer of 1980, a group of them held a secret meeting to discuss what might be done. They agreed, as one later wrote, that their "only protection lies in achieving maximum publicity" in order to show the Syrians that attacks on journalists would be counterproductive. They feared, however, that articles on the situation written from Beirut might lead to further harassment and violence. They decided instead to ask their home offices to print editorials and columns on the subject. Very few did so.

IV

IRONICALLY, Syrian violence against the press, intended to silence criticism, had another, perhaps unanticipated, effect—it made the PLO look good by comparison. From the time the Syrians arrived in the mid-70's, most of the Commodore Hotel correspondents believed that, at least in terms of its dealings with the press, the PLO could be counted among the "good guys"—helpful, and somehow even protective. As Edward Cody of the Washington *Post* put it, "You do not have to fear the PLO when you write about Palestinian affairs." Many of the Beirut veterans took as a proof of the organization's benevolence the fact that it accepted occasional unfavorable press stories, and they contrasted this apparent sophistication with the rigid intolerance and bloody-mindedness of the Syrians.

What many of the correspondents failed to see was that the PLO's liberality was hardly more than the willingness of a violent, powerful group to establish ground rules and then to allow the reporters to play by them. Journalists were free to write—as long as they avoided certain "sensitive" subjects. Western reporters were welcome in Beirut—provided that they were not considered "hostile" to the Palestinian revolution.

Most of the Beirut press corps never saw the PLO's stick—they were too busy chewing on its carrot. That carrot was the permission the PLO gave them to work in the Lebanese capital and its assistance in covering its own secret, semi-underground activities. Still, in the backs of their minds, even the most obtuse journalists knew that the stick existed.

In May 1979 Robert Pfeffer of *Stern* magazine was murdered in Beirut. The thirty-eight-year-old German was working on a book about contacts between the PLO and the Baader-Meinhof gang and other European terrorist groups. As usual in Beirut, the murderers escaped, and there was no serious investigation. But most of Pfeffer's colleagues guessed the identity of the murderers. As Doyle McManus, now of the Los Angeles *Times*, was later to observe, "Obviously Bob Pfeffer got killed, or at least most of us believe he got killed, for looking into the connection with Baader-Meinhof and the PFLP."

Following Pfeffer's murder, the Beirut press corps stayed away from the subject of the PLO's contacts with European terrorist organizations.

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As for the PLO itself, having established the limits of its tolerance, it turned back to the job of cultivating and befriending individual journalists. In the lawless atmosphere of Beirut, the organization could portray itself as the guardian of the press—presumably from the same Syrians with whom, despite periodic tensions, it was allied.

In conformity with the PLO-dependent security system, Western reporters became, in effect, accomplices to their own isolation and supervision. They clustered around the Palestinian-run Commodore, where they knew that their movements, contacts, and outgoing communications would be monitored. Some of those with separate offices in the city found that they needed local Palestinian employees in order to establish contacts and guide them through the complexities of life in Beirut. These assistants were, in many cases, subject to the discipline of the PLO; if the organization was circumspect in its dealings with most foreign reporters, it could afford to be far less so in its demands on its fellow Palestinians or Lebanese Muslims.

Even in their own homes, some journalists were "protected" by the PLO. Peter Ranke, Middle East correspondent for Springer publications, was once told by a colleague he visited in West Beirut that he was regularly watched by a PLO guard who lived in the basement of his building, ostensibly to protect stores of beer and coffee but actually to spy on the foreign residents of the apartment house. Ranke was skeptical until, as if on cue, the Palestinian guard appeared at the German journalist's door. As Ranke watched, astonished, the PLO man looked around the apartment, asked for a cold beer, and then left.

Sometimes PLO "protection" was totally shameless. After the murder of Robert Pfeffer, the PLO put out the word that *it* was conducting an investigation, and it did the same after the murder in 1981 of ABC's Sean Toolan. These investigative efforts by the suspects themselves were, apparently, taken at face value by a number of journalists in Beirut, who by that time had adopted an unquestioning belief in the PLO's role as their benefactor.

Many in the Beirut press corps also came to feel that they had a special obligation to help the PLO make its case in the West. Vincent Schodolski, former bureau chief of the UPI in Beirut, once told an interviewer, "I think people here try to keep balance, but you're here and have daily access to the Palestinians. You see the people, you see the refugee camps, you're bound to tell the story as you see it." Others were deeply committed to the Third World view of national liberation and wished the Palestinian revolution well. (This group included both serious ideologues and thrill-seeking groupies.) The sympathetic view of the PLO also colored the press corps' relations with Lebanon's Christians. Despite the fact that half the Lebanese story was on the Christian side, few foreign reporters visited that sector with any frequency, and virtually none lived there.

Some even encouraged their visiting colleagues to keep away from the Christian part of town. Former ABC *20/20* producer Barbara Newman, who came to Lebanon in 1980 to film part of a documentary, surprised and dismayed the ABC bureau in Beirut by planning to stay at the Christian-run Alexandre Hotel and not at the Commodore. The reaction caused the documentary's correspondent, Geraldo Rivera, to book rooms in both places and to ferry from one side to the other. Rivera was told by the late Lebanese leader Bashir Gemayel in 1980 that he was the first American television reporter to stay overnight in East Beirut.

Few professions are as vulnerable to the herd instinct as journalism, and once attitudes in the Beirut press corps were struck, they stuck: the PLO did not have much need to practice intimidation on the regulars in the Commodore Hotel. When it came to visiting journalists, however, the PLO had less reason to pull its punches. Correspondents who worked outside of Lebanon, and who had not been exposed to the influences that shaped the perceptions of their Beirut-based colleagues, could not be relied upon to respect, or even be aware of, PLO sensibilities. Many of these journalists were subjected to PLO threats or were simply not allowed to come to West Beirut at all.

Hans Benedict, one of the most widely respected European journalists, found himself a victim of "preventive intimidation" when he became diplomatic correspondent in the Middle East for Austrian national television in 1979. He applied to the Lebanese embassy in Vienna for a visa, and was astounded to learn that the answer was no. Even more amazing, a senior Lebanese diplomat told him that the decision had been made not by the Lebanese government but by the PLO.

Benedict had become unpopular with the PLO when he interviewed its Austrian representative, Gazi Hussein, in the fall of 1978 and asked about the Coastal Road massacre of Israeli civilians near Tel Aviv the previous spring. Hussein answered forthrightly that terrorism against Israelis, including women and children, was a legitimate tool of the Palestinian revolution and that the PLO would continue to use it as it saw fit. When the interview was aired, it caused a stir in Austria and was a major public-relations setback for the Palestinians.

The Lebanese diplomat who returned Benedict's visa application was apologetic. He told Benedict that applications for Lebanese press visas had to be authorized by PLO headquarters and "if we ask them for a visa for you, they'll be on the lookout for you at the airport." Benedict, who first started covering the Arab world in 1946 and served as a correspondent for AP behind the

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Iron Curtain for more than fifteen years, knew a death threat when he heard one. He did not get to the Lebanese capital until the PLO departed in August 1982.

Perhaps the most blatant threat was directed against Geraldo Rivera. In early 1981, after meeting with Israeli experts on the PLO and interviewing PLO prisoners in an Israeli prison in the course of preparing a documentary on terrorism, Rivera flew to Beirut via Rome. The next day, he and Barbara Newman were taken by ABC's Beirut correspondent, Jerry King, to a meeting with PLO spokesman Mahmud Labadi. Several armed men were in the room when the three arrived, and they remained there throughout the meeting. "I've been in very tight scrapes in my professional life," Rivera later recalled, "and those red flags don't get hoisted very often, but I definitely had a feeling that there were warnings implicit in almost everything Labadi said, in his entire attitude."

During the time Rivera worked on the documentary in Beirut, the warnings remained implicit. But when it was broadcast, the PLO's reaction crystallized. Rivera's colleagues in Beirut passed along the message: "Don't come back to West Beirut, or else. . . ." He also received telephoned death threats at his home in California. During the 1982 war, Rivera, like hundreds of other Western newsmen, found himself again in the Lebanese capital, in this case to do an exclusive interview with Lebanon's president-elect Bashir Gemayel. He checked with contacts and colleagues on the west side of the city to make sure that he could cross the border and do some reporting there. "I was told point-blank, and by more than one source, never to come back to West Beirut, to Palestinian territory. I was told that I had a death warrant out for me."

THE spring of 1981 was a time of considerable tension in Lebanon. Israel and Syria were facing off over the introduction of Syria's Soviet-made SAM missile system in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa region, and Israel was pursuing a policy of preemptive strikes against PLO concentrations in the southwestern coastal area. The Beirut press corps was overworked and tense, expecting a major Israeli assault. One day late in May, three American correspondents, Jonathan Randal of the Washington *Post* and William Farrell and John Kifner of the New York *Times*, decided to take some time off and have what Farrell later described as "a civilized dinner party, a dinner-jackets-in-the-jungle kind of evening" at Kifner's home in West Beirut. At about 11:30 their dinner party was interrupted by a telephone call. Someone informed Kifner that the long-anticipated Israeli raid on PLO bases in the Damur area was taking place.

Despite the late hour, the three decided to investigate. Their first stop was the Commodore Hotel. The consensus at the bar was that if there was a raid, it was probably a limited one; but Randal, Kifner, and Farrell decided that the tip was worth checking. Julian Nundy of *Newsweek* and William Foley, an Associated Press photographer, asked to come along and the five piled into Kifner's car and headed toward Damur, about fifteen miles south of Beirut. They never got there. At the outskirts of the city they were cut off and pulled over by a Red Crescent ambulance belonging to the PLO's first-aid and medical organization. Gunmen armed with assault rifles pulled them out of the car and demanded to see their identification papers, which they produced.

The armed men, members of the PFLP-GC faction of the PLO, examined the reporters' credentials, and decided to haul them in. Farrell later recalled:

> They booked us, police style, put our belongings in envelopes and took us to an area with narrow, high-ceilinged, almost coffinlike cells, about six-and-a-half feet long by three-and-a-half wide. They had steel doors with a little hatch you couldn't see out of at all. There were no toilets, just a foam rubber pallet on the floor. It was hot as hell inside.

After about two hours, the reporters were stripped and searched. Later they were taken, one at a time, into an interrogation room, where they were questioned by two men. Not everyone got the same treatment. At least two feared that their lives were in danger. So, apparently, did their colleagues in town, who engaged in a frantic search throughout Beirut for the five journalists, contacting, in the process, senior officials of the PLO (a fact which lends weight to the supposition that the PFLP men were aware of the journalists' identities early on).

At about five P.M., the five were reunited for the first time in fifteen hours. They were taken to another building, where they received profuse apologies, and were then released. When they were freed, Kifner raised the question of whether the story should be reported. *Time* later quoted one of the journalists as saying: "We made an informal agreement that we would not write about the incident. The stories would have just embarrassed everyone involved." Especially the PLO.

V

THE STORY of Palestinian-Syrian-controlled West Beirut between 1975 and 1982 is thus one of terror against journalists—Syrian terror wielded like a baseball bat, with crude, broad strokes; PLO terror, a scalpel used with discrimination and subtlety. Some resisted and paid with their lives, their careers, or their access to Beirut; others succumbed, wholly or partially, to the threats, the pressure, and the inducements to "get on the team." And in the case of the PLO, many journalists did not need much encouragement.

Much of what went on in Lebanon and neigh-

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boring Syria was only partially reported or rarely mentioned—the excesses of the Assad regime, the PLO mini-state in South Lebanon, Palestinian links with international terrorists, and so forth. As in all cases of self-censorship, it is impossible to know *what* was being covered up; and in the case of Beirut, the problem was compounded by an even greater omission—the failure or outright refusal of Western news organizations to tell the truth about pressures and threats directed against their journalists in the Arab world.

This refusal was at variance with normal journalistic practice; more importantly, it meant the public could not properly evaluate the credibility of news reports from much of the Middle East. Readers and viewers who were unaware of the atmosphere of intimidation and violence that existed in Beirut, for example, could not know that much of the news from there between 1975 and 1982 was filtered through a veil of fear, caution, and self-censorship; nor did they have any idea that there was news they were not getting at all, because some reporters had been driven out of the Lebanese capital. Censorship in Lebanon was accomplished by terror, exclusion, and expulsion—yet, remarkably, most news organizations acted as if the public had no right to know that it was going on.

There were, of course, exceptions. The PLO's abduction of Philip Caputo in 1975 was given considerable publicity by his paper, the Chicago *Tribune*. *Newsweek*, in the summer of 1976, printed a page-long story on the violence against foreign correspondents, including two of its own reporters, in Beirut. The imposition of Syrian-inspired censorship in early 1977 elicited a few critical articles in the Western press. But as the civil war dragged on and the Beirut-based correspondents got used to the situation and made their accommodations with it, less and less was mentioned about the pressure they faced. From mid-1976 until the summer of 1980, a four-year period in which a number of journalists were killed or harassed and the Lebanese press was effectively muted, almost nothing was reported by the American media about the situation in Lebanon. The murder of Robert Pfeffer, a politically motivated assassination, was barely noticed; the abduction and killing of Salim Lawzi, which shocked and frightened the Beirut press corps, was briefly noted in a few major newspapers and ignored by almost everyone else.

News organizations whose own personnel were under attack often tried to play down the incidents. *Time*, for example, sought to keep the plight of William Marmon a secret. When the two BBC correspondents Tim Llewelyn and Jim Muir were driven out of Beirut in 1980, the BBC at first said nothing, in the apparent hope that it could negotiate their return. When that failed, it made a belated and terse announcement about the situation and continued to "report" on Lebanon from Nicosia, Cyprus. The BBC's public, which included not only Great Britain but millions around the world who depend on the World Service for independent and comprehensive news was effectively shut out of the Lebanese capital. Most had no idea that this was so.

Reuters, the world's largest news agency, was no more forthright when Berndt Debusmann was shot. It reported the incident but made no mention of the previous Syrian threats to the correspondent, and compounded omission with distortion by saying that "there was no known reason for the shooting."

Only a handful of newspapers addressed the issue editorially, among them the British *Economist* and the *Guardian*. The *Guardian* noted: "Although the BBC and Reuters were well aware that Syria was responsible for the intimidation of their reporters, neither organization felt able to publicize the fact." The *Economist* was blunter:

> The Syrians have thus forced the representatives of the BBC and Reuters out of Lebanon by terrorism and have got away with it without even being named. Foreign and local pressmen in Beirut were all in favor of a concerted exposure of the Syrian role, but when the two leading British news organizations declined to name any names, the protest collapsed.

Throughout the next two years, this pattern continued. The 1981 murder of ABC correspondent Sean Toolan was given a single 30-second mention on his own network, while the other two networks ignored it completely. The New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* reported it briefly, and only the Los Angeles *Times* gave the murder serious attention. Other outrages against newsmen in Beirut, including the death threats that resulted in the December 1980 flight from the city of CBS's Larry Pintak, threats against Neal Temko of the *Christian Science Monitor*, and, preeminently, the seizure of the five American correspondents in the summer of 1981, went mostly unreported.

ALTHOUGH the primary victim of this silence was the public, whose right to know was being subverted by a combination of Arab terror and journalistic acquiescence or indifference, there were serious consequences for Israel as well, which was engaged in a struggle with both the PLO and Syria. If the press in Beirut was not reporting fully out of a fear of Arab reprisal, then Israel was being forced to fight the war for Western public opinion with one hand tied behind its back. People who knew little about the PLO's operations in southern Lebanon or its connections with international terrorist groups or about the internal situation in Syria often found Israel's concern about these matters "paranoid" and its attempts to deal with them overreactive. Moreover, when Israel tried to point out what was happening in Lebanon or Syria, its arguments had little credibility—after all, there were

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plenty of American and European reporters in Beirut who would surely be aware of a Palestinian "mini-state" in south Lebanon if one existed, or of large-scale massacres in Syria.

The notion that the intimidation of Western journalists in Beirut was working—to Israel's detriment—began to sink in after the murder of Salim Lawzi in early 1980. As the director of Israel's government press office, I was then in close contact with many of the foreign correspondents in the Middle East. Some of them who visited Jerusalem told hair-raising stories about personal experiences they had had; many admitted that there were now subjects that they would not report. For almost two years I waited for an article on how the press was being abused in Lebanon. Finally, in February 1982, I decided to raise the issue myself.

The immediate stimulus was an ABC documentary about the West Bank entitled "Under the Israeli Thumb." The program was exceptional in the harsh accusations it made about the occupation of the West Bank and in its refusal to present any Israeli point of view. I knew that ABC had recently had difficulties with the PLO in Beirut, and I thought there might be some connection. I called David K. Shipler of the New York *Times*, who was widely admired for his ability to understand and convey the feelings of all sides in the complex Arab-Israeli equation, and suggested an on-the-record discussion of the issue.

My interview with Shipler, which lasted about an hour, was printed two days later in the *International Herald Tribune*. The Paris-based *Tribune*, widely distributed in Israel, is published as a cooperative venture of the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*. Shipler had done his usual accurate job. He began by setting forth my central contention—that terrorism was being used against correspondents in Beirut—along with my qualification that it was very often the news organizations, concerned for the safety of their personnel, who decided on self-censorship. The interview then went on to my suspicion that ABC had been trying to ingratiate itself with the PLO by doing puff pieces on the organization. I also mentioned the shooting of Berndt Debusmann of Reuters and the warning to BBC reporter Tim Llewelyn, and noted that the BBC had tried to cover up the latter incident and that it still had no regular correspondent in the Lebanese capital. I also raised, without mentioning any names, the hitherto unreported 1981 abduction of the five American reporters, including those from the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*, who were seized and held by the PFLP-GC.

Although the interview appeared promptly in the *International Herald Tribune*, it was not published in the *Times* until February 14, and then only after the two paragraphs about the *Times* correspondents and the apparent decision to keep their detention a secret had been cut.

The *Times* had thus confirmed my original charge—that news organizations in the U.S. and elsewhere were committing acts of self-censorship to protect their own interests. I asked William Claiborne, the Jerusalem-based correspondent of the Washington *Post*, if the *Post* might be interested in *this* story, but after checking with his home office he said no. Norman Kempster of the Los Angeles *Times* thought it was a good story, but his foreign editor evidently did not. I had better luck with Tim McNulty of the Chicago *Tribune*. Three days later, that newspaper became one of the first to report on the *Times*'s censorship of my charges that it had committed self-censorship.

THE Israeli media also seized on the story. The Jerusalem *Post* carried a front-page article, several Hebrew papers gave it headline treatment, and the national radio led its morning news bulletins with the incident. Now, I was certain, the wire services, AP and UPI, would pick it up and send it out to their thousands of clients. But neither would touch it. They first mentioned the affair ten days later, after both *Time* and *Newsweek* had devoted full pages to it in their "Media" sections—one of the rare occasions when the wire services have been scooped by weekly magazines.

On February 18, four days after the sanitized interview appeared, the *Times* published a follow-up entitled "Official in Israel Assails the Times." It now reported my criticism of the paper for deleting the story of the detention of the two *Times* correspondents, and then went on:

> Craig H. Whitney, deputy foreign editor of the New York *Times*, said . . . "It is the policy of the *Times* to report difficulties encountered by its correspondents in the course of reporting only if the difficulties themselves become news and we did not consider this such a case, then or now."

This was apparently a new policy. A recent, prominently displayed, article by Youssef M. Ibrahim, an Egyptian-American who then worked for the *Times*, had described his crossing from Jordan into Israel by way of the Allenby Bridge. He had arrived at the bridge unannounced, carrying tapes of conversations with leaders in the PLO and correspondence among various PLO officials. These aroused the interest of Israeli security officials. Ibrahim was questioned for about five hours and then allowed to drive to Jerusalem. Some of his notebooks were examined and returned a day later. In the shuffle, a pair of pants got lost. Ibrahim was understandably agitated, especially about the five-hour delay, and proved it by writing a tough piece which the *Times* published. But he had never been locked up in a cell or threatened by gunmen, nor was he held overnight. Was his experience more newsworthy than that of his colleagues in Beirut?

Then there was the article by Martin Tolchin,

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the *Times* White House correspondent, about his experience trying to get permission to cross from Jordan into Israel via the Allenby Bridge. In this article, Tolchin described his feeling that he and his family had been treated rudely by the Jordanian bureaucracy because they were Jewish. Certainly Tolchin's experience was unpleasant and aggravating, but it was a far cry from twenty hours in a PLO slammer. If the *Times* had a policy of not printing stories about difficulties encountered by its journalists "unless the difficulties themselves became news," it was a rather selective one.

On February 22, twelve days after the interview had first run in the *Herald Tribune*, the *Times* made an effort to rectify matters with a piece entitled "Reporter's Notebook: Fear Is Part of the Job in Beirut." In it, John Kifner described the conditions under which he and his colleagues were forced to work and the possible implications for the reader who expected full and comprehensive information. In Beirut, Kifner admitted, "a journalist must often weigh when, how, and even whether to record a story." The piece was somewhat bland and defensive in tone, but at least it confirmed the existence of serious harassment of journalists in Beirut.

Although Kifner did not say so in his article, he was very nervous about having had to write it. He made an unusual request—that the *Times* run the article in New York but keep it out of the *International Herald Tribune*, the reverse of what had happened with my interview with Shipler. The *Times*, once again bowing to the fear of Arab violence, agreed. But by mistake the *Tribune* did publish the article. At this point, Kifner decided it would be a good time to go elsewhere for a few days. His hurried departure from Beirut might have gone unnoticed but for an article by the London *Observer*'s news service which stated that Kifner had left because of threats he received after his February 22 story was published in the *Tribune*. The *Observer* article was written by its Beirut correspondent, Colin Smith, who did not ask to be anonymous. In an effort to protect him, however, the *Observer* left his name off the story and bylined it only "A Special Correspondent," a designation that greatly concerned Smith's stringer in Beirut who feared that he, and not Smith, might be held accountable by local gunmen.

If the New York *Times* finally dealt with the story, other American news organizations were less forthcoming. *Newsweek*, for example, carried an article, "Who's Afraid of the PLO?," that was written in part by Julian Nundy, who had been one of the five detainees. The article, which did not explain why Nundy had failed at the time to report on his detention, sought to minimize the whole event by noting that the correspondents had been held and then released "with profuse apologies." Missing from the *Newsweek* account (but included in *Time*'s article on the incident that same week) was the fact that the reporters had been abducted at gunpoint, and that at least two of them had felt their lives were in danger.

Throughout the controversy, only one of the American news organizations whose reporters had been involved in the PLO abduction—the Washington *Post*—managed to keep the whole matter blacked out of its news pages. Finally, several weeks after the incident, Martin Peretz of the *New Republic* exposed the *Post*'s stonewalling. In "A Journalistic Cover-Up," Peretz noted that "the Washington *Post* hasn't given the story an inch" and revealed, for the first time, the names of the abducted reporters.

The *Post*'s vehicle for finally addressing the controversy was an op-ed article by the foreign editor, Jim Hoagland. Writing on March 4, Hoagland conceded that there was "something" in my charges—at least with regard to the Syrians. As for the PLO, however, he described it as a benevolent force which "tacitly provides protection for the American embassy and [has] as often pulled correspondents out of scrapes as imperiled them." Regarding the failure of Jonathan Randal to report on his detention by the PLO, Hoagland admitted that "in retrospect Randal was probably a bit too phlegmatic in dismissing [it] so lightly," but he also cited *Post* correspondent Edward Cody on the exquisite symmetry of the threat to journalists. "You know that you can get picked up by Palestinian kids with guns anytime you do your job. Or you know you may be bombed by Israeli jets. That does not mean you write any differently." No doubt even Cody had not intended to say that Israel was carrying out air raids on journalists in order to intimidate them. Yet Hoagland made it seem that Israeli jets posed the same threat to press freedoms as the "Palestinian kids" who had murdered Robert Pfeffer, threatened Geraldo Rivera and Hans Benedict, and driven Milan Kubic and William Marmon out at gunpoint.

Worst by far, however, was Hoagland's version of how the entire incident of the five reporters' abduction had first come to light. He wrote:

> Chafets said that one of the reporters, William Farrell, formerly Jerusalem correspondent for the *Times* and now based in Cairo, had subsequently told him the five were "held for a number of hours and threatened and frightened."

I had, in fact, never mentioned Farrell's name at all, never mentioned *any* names, and certainly had not said what my source for the story was. Hoagland, by publicly naming Farrell, who was still stationed in the Middle East, as a source of information for an Israeli official, was making a charge that could get the *Times* reporter into serious trouble in the Arab world. Hoagland had never contacted me to check this point. I later learned he had never bothered to contact Farrell, either, who was badly frightened and upset by Hoagland's article.

I immediately wrote a letter to the *Post* setting

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the record straight and challenging Hoagland to produce evidence that Farrell had told me of the incident. It took six weeks and three transoceanic telephone calls for the letter to be published, along with the following note:

> Mr. Hoagland replies: "In July 1981, Mr. Chafets told William Claiborne, the Washington *Post*'s Jerusalem correspondent, that Mr. Farrell had recounted the Damur incident to him that month, and Mr. Chafets confirmed that fact in an on-the-record interview with Mr. Claiborne on February 15, 1982."

This was a plain lie. There had been no interview, just a private conversation in which I had tried to interest the *Post* in the self-censorship issue and in which Farrell's name had not figured at all. When I asked Claiborne about this, he readily agreed the facts were as I had stated them, and confessed he did not know what the *Post* was up to.

On April 28, the *Post* ran a "correction," signed by William Claiborne:

> On April 17, the *Post* published a letter from Ze'ev Chafets denying that he had publicly said that William Farrell of the New York *Times* had told him of the detention of five Western reporters in Beirut in 1981 by Palestinian guerrillas. Through an error it was stated in a response that my conversation with Mr. Chafets on this point on February 15 was on the record. Mr. Chafets did not address that point on the record during the February 15 conversation, and continues to refuse to say for the record if he had discussed the incident with Mr. Farrell.

THE *Post*'s behavior in this matter sheds some light, I think, on its recurrent problems with accuracy. The formula is one part carelessness, one part arrogance, with a big touch of bias thrown in. The bias in this case may have to do with the fact that the good name of the PLO, whose cause the *Post*, under Hoagland's guidance, had adopted, was being called into question.

For as a cursory look through the *Post*'s back issues reveals, the paper often publicizes the difficulties its reporters encounter in the line of duty, even when these difficulties are considerably less serious than abduction at gunpoint. There was, for example, "Rumanian Agents Blunder After Visiting Newsman," by correspondent Michael Dobbs, a seventeen-paragraph article about being followed on a visit to Rumania; or "Interrogation —Post Reporter Runs Afoul of Bolivian Army," twenty-two paragraphs devoted to Charles A. Krause's arrest and interrogation by "five army intelligence agents, one of them armed with a submachine gun." The whole episode lasted, according to Krause, nearly three hours, and he was never threatened physically. Other stories in recent years included a report that Indonesian authorities had refused to renew the visa of a *Post* stringer; a long article on reporters' working conditions in Poland; and a piece stating that the *Post* correspondent in Moscow had been called in by Soviet authorities for a fifteen-minute meeting in which he was "rebuked" for some allegedly "slanderous assertions" about the USSR. Only when the "authorities" in question were ones the *Post* had been touting as moderate and responsible did the incident cease to be newsworthy.

Nor has the *Post* correspondent Jonathan Randal always been so "phlegmatic" when he has come under attack—even in Beirut. In 1975 he published a stirring first-person article entitled "Morning in Rebel Hands," recounting how, just after dawn, armed men had burst into his room, arrested him, and taken him and some of his belongings into headquarters. His detention that time lasted not twenty hours but only a couple. Randal was not locked up, merely questioned and then taken to the home of his old friend, the Algerian ambassador. Yet the grippingly written article—in which the reader learned, among other things, that Randal had worked in Vietnam, that Randal had worked in Algeria, that Randal spoke French, that Randal was cool in tight situations, and that Randal slept in boxer shorts and a black T-shirt—was presumably intended to convey a sense of the perilous situation in Beirut. If so, it is hard to see why what happened to Randal in May 1981 should have been any less revealing of the climate or less interesting to *Post* readers. But that, perhaps, is the point. In October 1975 Randal's abductors were "members of two Lebanese Communist outfits," not members of the PLO.

VI

TAKEN together, the incidents recounted here add up to a depressing chapter in Western journalism. The essence of journalistic credibility is candor, both in what is reported and about what restrictions and constraints limit or influence that reporting. But at one time or another over a period of some seven years, Reuters, *Time*, *Newsweek*, the New York *Times*, the Washington *Post*, CBS, ABC, the Associated Press—to name only some—played an active part in hiding from the public many of the facts about what was happening in Lebanon in general and, in particular, the way in which their newsmen were being subjected to intimidation and violence there. By acquiescing in this state of affairs through silence, cover-up, and other accommodations, some of which are known, others of which we can only speculate about, the Western news organizations betrayed their readers, their traditions, and their own standards.

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How to Understand Central America

Mark Falcoff

It is now more than three years since Central America became the United States' most dramatic and divisive foreign-policy issue since the Vietnam war. It has dominated the front pages of newspapers for many months; co-opted almost all of the prime moments of national television news; fueled acrimonious exchanges in Congress; and ignited a national protest movement, centered in the universities and the churches but reaching into unions, professional associations, and the cultural community. For a while it even became a bone of contention between the two leading candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination, and it is certain to become one of the three or four major issues of the 1984 campaign.

Alongside all of these facts—impressive in themselves—one more must be placed. In spite of the vast menu of information, allegation, and misinformation served up to them, most Americans know almost nothing about Central America and, it would appear, are determined to keep it that way. An April poll conducted by CBS News found that only 25 percent of those interviewed knew which side the United States was supporting in El Salvador, and a mere 13 percent could correctly affirm that the United States was (at the time) supporting anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua. Moreover, knowledge about El Salvador is now *lower* than it was a year ago, when 37 percent could correctly state that the United States supported the government there.

What, then, is the argument about? And who is doing the arguing? In a very general way it could be said that the Central American controversy is really the latest installment in a fifteen-year-old civil war between two branches of the foreign-policy establishment and its affiliates over the proper uses of U.S. power; over the causes of political insurgency; over the moral and political character of "revolutionary" regimes in the Third World; and, preeminently, over the nature of security threats to the United States and the proper measures to meet them.

These are important subjects, even if only a small percentage of Americans have the interest or the time to think much about them. They are fraught with consequences for our foreign policy generally, and the fact that they nicely mesh with partisan political considerations does nothing to detract from their charm. The form and intensity with which they are debated also illustrate a point about the United States which many foreigners persist in missing: this is a country where political controversy often concerns ideas.

Where, then, do people get their ideas about Central America? The variety of sources is wide, but two in particular are of great significance to policy-makers and foreign-policy professionals, if not to the public at large. One is the reports issued by commissions of distinguished citizens, "concerned" laity of some religious denomination or other, or equally "concerned" academics who have made a trip to El Salvador or Nicaragua or (often) both. The best-known such document—the *Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America*, chaired by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger—is actually the least typical of all, since it alone found itself, with slight quibbles here and there, fundamentally in accord with the policies of the Reagan administration. Far more characteristic of the genre is *The Americas in 1984: A Year for Decisions*, the report of the Inter-American Dialogue, a panel of distinguished political and business leaders from North and South America, chaired by Ambassador Sol M. Linowitz and former Ecuadorian President Galo Plaza. While this document deals with several aspects of U.S.-Latin American relations, the sections concerned with Central America have been regarded (quite properly) as the most newsworthy.

The second source is the collective studies constructed by teams of academics (and, sometimes, policy-makers temporarily out of government). Nearly a dozen of these have appeared since 1981, some edited with a heavier ideological hand than others but virtually all primly or not so primly disapproving of our present course. The most interesting and original is *Central America: Anatomy of Conflict*, edited by Robert S. Leiken for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This group, three of whose members held positions in the Carter administration, was at work roughly during the same time as the Kissinger commission,

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and its study was published almost simultaneously. Indeed, there is reason to believe that, in a manner wholly characteristic of Washington, the Leiken group was hastily assembled to provide a ready-made alternative to the findings of the Kissinger commission; this, certainly, was the way it was received by administration critics, although in reality, as we shall see, *Central America: Anatomy of Conflict* contains a far greater diversity of views than one would have gathered from its reception.

These documents and their analogs play a disproportionate role in determining the parameters of the Central American debate. Indirectly, but no less decisively, they shape the kinds of questions the President and others are asked at press conferences, the agendas of congressional committees, and eventually the notions—however watered-down or inaccurate—held by a majority of the American people. They therefore deserve serious examination.

II

By now a majority of Americans—57 percent according to the April poll of CBS News—think that "the greater cause of unrest in Central America [is] poverty and lack of human rights in the area, [as opposed to] subversion from Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Soviet Union." Yet as Richard Feinberg and Robert Pastor point out in the Carnegie Endowment study, the image of these countries as primitive, stagnant "banana republics"—held even by many educated Americans—is vastly out of date. In fact, few regions since World War II have experienced such rapid, dramatic, and sustained economic and social development. Between 1950 and 1978, the Central American republics registered a 5.3 percent annual rate of economic growth, during which time real per-capita income doubled, exports diversified, and there was a significant growth in manufacturing, due largely to the creation in 1960 of a Central American Common Market (CACM). Moreover, meaningful progress was made in health and education: between 1960 and 1977 the number of physicians doubled at a rate twice as fast as the population, and the number of nurses six times as fast. Adult literacy during roughly the same period nearly doubled from 44 to 77 percent, and the number of secondary students as a percentage of their age group increased from 12 to 29 percent.

Of course, as Pastor and Feinberg hasten to point out, there were considerable variations among countries. Moreover, in Central America as elsewhere in the developing world, modernization brought unforeseen (and undesired) consequences. Pastor and Feinberg point specifically to dramatic improvements in public health which unleashed a "demographic earthquake"—between 1950 and 1980, the region's population tripled, and today half are under the age of fifteen. (Significantly, had the population only replaced itself, per-capita income during the same period would have *quintupled*.) The development of commercial agriculture provoked new tensions over land tenure in the countryside, just as industry generated new conflicts between management and a struggling labor movement. While the "floor" beneath Central Americans rose dramatically, the gap widened between rich and poor, and particularly between rural and urban dwellers. Much of the new infrastructure—roads, schools, hospitals, and other public services—was financed either by U.S. aid or by the international lending institutions; tax collections generally remained low, so that what the foreigner was not willing to finance generally remained undone. That is why, in spite of nearly two decades of progress, as late as 1981 it was estimated that 42 percent of the population remained in "extreme poverty."

Even if the process of development just described had continued in a linear fashion, raising the floor still further to include most of those left out, the region would have experienced serious political instability because of the challenge posed by economic and social change to existing political structures, particularly in Guatemala and El Salvador. But after 1978, Pastor and Feinberg write, the problem was compounded "by the impact of a global recession on small, open, dependent economies," which, in the opinion of these authors, put into place "the classic preconditions for a revolutionary situation."

In other words, the causes of instability in Central America are *both* the successes of past policies and their failings; the promise of overcoming underdevelopment and its lack of fulfillment; the achievements of foreign aid and its limitations; the imagination and flexibility of local elites and their selfishness and myopia. Poverty is part of the picture, and from a humanitarian point of view perhaps the most important. But relative deprivation and the sudden interruption of an ongoing process, combined with political developments both internal and external to the region, have raised the stakes, costs, and risks of almost any course of action designed to deal with poverty. Thus even a resumption of massive economic aid in and of itself may not guarantee a return to social peace. It does, however, hold out far greater promise than cheap political "fixes," or, worse, an attitude of pious indifference as if "poverty," the condition of centuries, were irremediable, and therefore whatever unsavory political arrangements may seem in the offing—namely armed dictatorships of the Left—must be accepted as the just retribution for an evil past.

III

Nowhere has the conflict between economic growth and outdated social structures been more pointed than in El Salvador.

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In this tiny republic—slightly smaller than the state of Massachusetts, with a population of five million—no fewer than four revolutions are under way.

One is among the military, which, alarmed by the outcome of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, divided in 1979 over continued support for the traditional order. The second is among the emerging political forces of the middle class and the infant peasant and labor movements. For a brief moment in 1979, these groups ruled in conjunction with the younger officers who had ousted dictator Carlos Humberto Romero. During that time they decreed a series of extensive land, tax, and banking reforms. However, shortly thereafter the leadership split, with a Social-Democratic component under Dr. Guillermo Ungo going over to the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the political directorate of the guerrillas who are fighting—this is the third revolution—to impose a Marxist-Leninist regime on El Salvador.* The fourth is actually a counterrevolution in the most technical sense of the term—former military officers (and some still on active duty), and a coterie of landowners, businessmen, and professionals who object more or less equally to the first three and who seek to extinguish their leaders and supporters, real or imagined, by recourse to political assassination. Hence the macabre term which has entered our political vocabulary, "death squads."

During the past five years the United States has been supporting the efforts of those civilians and military personnel willing to carry forward the original objectives of the revolution of 1979. In March 1982, elections were held for a constituent assembly, and in May 1984 the Christian Democrat José Napoleón Duarte (president of the first junta in 1979) was elected president of El Salvador by a majority of the popular vote. Meanwhile, the country has received a massive infusion of U.S. economic and military aid, both to combat the rising guerrilla movement and to stabilize an economy doubly beset by war and recession.

The Reagan administration is riding a difficult tiger in El Salvador, in that its scenario calls for some unwieldy pieces to fall neatly into place. Duarte must meet some minimal popular expectations as a reformer and a democrat, without unduly antagonizing the large conservative minority —approximately 45 percent of the electorate— who voted for his far-Right opponent, Roberto D'Aubuisson of the ARENA party. These two agendas may be very hard to reconcile, given the fact that the political spectrum in El Salvador is far wider than in the United States and opinion far more polarized. Like most Latin American Christian Democrats, Duarte cherishes fundamentally pre-capitalist notions of property, and favors the use of state power to reduce social and economic inequalities. His views on that subject, by no means extreme by Latin American standards, would shock most American conservatives if they knew more about them; in fact, were Duarte only anti-American as well, he and not Dr. Ungo would enjoy the status of a cult figure among the elegant Left in Western Europe and the United States.

This is not all: Duarte must also demonstrate his capacity to control the armed forces, and to reduce if not to eliminate human-rights abuses and the activities of private vigilantes of the Right. He must advance investigations of past misdeeds, particularly those in which the U.S. Congress and public have a strong and legitimate interest. And lastly, the military itself must demonstrate not merely that it can respect civilian authority but also that it can prosecute effectively the war against the insurgents. The contributors to the Carnegie Endowment study who have examined whether this is possible point to the enormous historical baggage which must first be discarded, and one of them (Howard J. Wiarda) argues that the professionalization of the armed forces, rather than producing less military intervention in politics, may actually increase the tendency of the officer corps to play a political role. He also emphasizes the difficulties of trying to reform an essentially praetorian army, in which clan, family, and patronage loyalties may be stronger than ties to the nation or its civilian government.

A shorthand way of describing the situation in El Salvador is to say that the Center, or perhaps more accurately the Center-Left, is split, with one part in an uncomfortable relationship with the military and the United States, the other in an even more problematic relationship with the FMLN, the Nicaraguans, the Cubans, and ultimately the Soviets. The Right has so far been unable to reassert itself as the dominant political force, but it still possesses the capacity to undermine a moderate solution; this, U.S. officials and not a few Salvadorans fear, would simply lead to the worst of both worlds—first a coup and repression from the Right, followed by a revolution and repression of a more systematic and permanent kind from the Left.

IN THE United States, debate over El Salvador has centered on two issues—how to use U.S. influence to bring about an elimination of human-rights abuses, and whether and under what circumstances it is possible to reconstitute the two sundered wings of the Center-Left so that each can afford to abandon its respective dependence on the army or the guerrillas. The first turns on some incredibly arcane formulations

* The FMLN is an amalgam of five guerrilla groups unified under Cuban sponsorship in 1979. Those elements of the first junta who went over to it are formally construed as the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), affiliated with the Socialist International. The correct designation of the guerrillas' unified directorate is thus FMLN-FDR.

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about the "conditionality" of U.S. aid. In the view of some of the administration's critics, as long as the Salvadoran military can take for granted U.S. arms shipments and other forms of assistance, it will have no incentive to eliminate human-rights abuses. Those who served in the Carter administration now point with some pride to the "leverage" which they supposedly obtained in El Salvador in 1980, following a three-year arms embargo. This, they assert, demonstrated to the Salvadoran military how serious the United States was about the issue—a lesson now lost by the "blank check" supposedly issued by the Reagan team.

Unfortunately, whatever leverage might have been obtained by the Carter policy was more metaphysical than actual; for 1980 was the worst year in Salvadoran history in terms of political murders, disappearances, and other serious abuses. This is not to argue against the concept of conditionality, but merely to suggest that in practice it may be unattainable, or that policies intended to promote it may have consequences far different from those intended. It is also possible—though admittedly unprovable—that a clear reading by Salvadorans of the general mood of the U.S. public and Congress, combined with strong representations by U.S. envoys and military representatives, may accomplish just as much or even more. We do know, for example, that estimates of civilian deaths attributable to political violence in El Salvador over the past two and a half years reflect a very significant pattern of decline.

THE SECOND issue—how to reconstitute the Center-Left—is even more complicated. It begins with the notion that the United States is pursuing a military victory, which is impossible, instead of a "negotiated solution," which is supposedly within reach. Precisely what form the latter would take varies from source to source. President Duarte has in fact offered to negotiate a reconciliation with those forces of the non-Marxist (or at any rate non-Leninist) Left who have gone over to the guerrillas; this would allow them to reenter Salvadoran political life with no restriction, much as occurred in the 1970's in Venezuela. Dr. Ungo and his associates, as well as their many foreign apologists, claim that the incapacity of President Duarte to guarantee their safety from the military and the death squads makes this impossible; they favor negotiations leading to "power-sharing."

The latter is a solution with which no American political figure has yet become identified, although it has already found some resonance in the foreign-policy community. The Inter-American Dialogue recommends "negotiations among the belligerents" which would not supplant the recent Salvadoran elections but would somehow modify their outcome in important (though not wholly specified) ways; it hotly denies, however, that this would be power-sharing pure and simple.

A number of the contributors to the Carnegie Endowment study favor power-sharing quite openly, but with an original twist—they suggest symmetrical solutions be imposed *both* on El Salvador and Nicaragua. In the former, the Left would be brought into the government; in the latter, the Center would be restored to the posts it held immediately after the fall of Somoza. (One dissenting voice in this group is that of Tom J. Farer, who favors power-sharing in El Salvador but not in Nicaragua.)

How well power-sharing would work in El Salvador depends wholly upon one's view of what the FMLN-FDR is and what it represents. Robert S. Leiken, who directed the Carnegie study and is its most widely-quoted author, has been for many years a student of the Central American revolutionary Left, and his portrait of the Salvadoran insurgents draws upon a wide range of personal contacts. He does not deny that the guerrillas are Marxist-Leninists, but the heart of his analysis is that the largest, best-armed, and most powerful faction in the rebel camp is, if not positively anti-Soviet, at any rate the one that "stand[s] at greatest distance from the Soviet Union." Our policy, by ignoring this fact, "pushes the nonaligned Left into the arms of those who are pro-Soviet." Leiken continues:

> U.S. national security would indeed be threatened by Soviet-aligned regimes in the Caribbean Basin, but not necessarily by independent leftist regimes—even if they speak the language of Marxism and seek to practice socialism.

This presumably puts our security concerns to rest. It still leaves open the question, however, of whether the integration of putatively anti-Soviet Marxist-Leninists into the Salvadoran government would advance the cause of human rights. Or rather, it circles right around it, by taking for granted that power-sharing would lead to some sort of "moderate" leftist regime. All Leiken can offer by way of assurance on this score is the FMLN's own assurance that as part of a negotiated settlement, it would be (in Leiken's words) "prepared to participate in elections, and to guarantee a nonaligned foreign policy and a mixed economy."

Leiken's co-contributor Leonel Gómez, a former land-reform official who fled El Salvador in 1981, is far less certain what the outcome of such an arrangement would be:

> While the true popular support of the FMLN-FDR coalition is difficult to measure, given the choice between the Left and the Right most Salvadorans would choose the Left, due to its less violent and corrupt history. Still, they wonder how the Left would evolve if it came to power.
>
> However, given the Salvadoran centrists' lack of trust toward the Left, and given the divisions within the Left itself, a left-wing government in

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El Salvador might prove more repressive and less flexible than that in Nicaragua.

To summarize, then: as an alternative to existing policy, with all of its admitted perils and difficulties, we are invited to believe that by withholding military aid from El Salvador—or at any rate, credibly threatening to withhold it—we will best serve the cause of human rights, notwithstanding that doing so may lead in the meantime to the victory of the Left revolutionary forces. Although these forces openly and unashamedly avow a totalitarian ideology which, among other things, points to a deep affinity with the Soviet Union, we are asked to sponsor their entry into a governing coalition in El Salvador on the strength of the fact that they *say* they favor nonalignment, free elections, and a mixed economy. In a word, we are urged not to take Marxism-Leninism any more seriously than loyalty to a brand name; if we persist in taking it seriously, we are warned that we will actually bring about the outcome we most fear. All this rings with a certain depressing familiarity.

IV

THE familiarity stems from the fact that the same arguments were advanced a mere five years ago on behalf of a similar policy toward Nicaragua. There, a vast popular revolution against the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza was at its culminating moment, led by the Marxist FSLN but including a wide range of moderate, even conservative political and social groups. In exchange for promises of free elections, a mixed economy, and a nonaligned foreign policy, the Organization of American States (including a reluctant United States) took the unprecedented step of withdrawing recognition from a sitting government. This had the effect—deliberately intended—of opening the road to power of its armed opponents.

The victorious revolutionary coalition in Nicaragua lasted an extraordinarily short time. Somoza fled the country in July 1979; in April 1980, Violeta Chamorro, publisher of the courageously independent newspaper *La Prensa,* and businessman Alfonso Robelo resigned from the new Council of State, largely in protest against a plan by the Sandinistas "to reflect the concrete and objective reality of political forces in Nicaragua," which is to say, to swamp it with representatives from the revolutionary army and other, hastily-organized Sandinista groups.

After several weeks of harsh verbal exchanges between the Sandinistas and their quondam allies in the private sector, a temporary peace was achieved. Banker Arturo Cruz and Supreme Court Justice Rafael Cordova Rivas were brought into the Council of State; decrees confiscating lands and privately-owned companies were canceled; dates were set in 1981 and 1982 for elections to municipal councils and a constituent assembly.

Then suddenly in August 1980 the Sandinista directorate announced that elections would be postponed to 1985, and in November all the remaining non-Sandinista members of the Council walked out in protest over an attack on the office of an independent political party in Managua; the directorate also forbade a rally which had been convoked by Robelo's National Democratic Movement. On that occasion—the first of many—censorship was applied to non-government media, most notably *La Prensa.*

Dates are important here, because so many foreigners have claimed that the unfortunate turn of events in Nicaragua is in some undefined way a reaction to hostility and incomprehension on the part of the United States. The truth is that in September 1980 the U.S. Congress—after a long and bruising battle—finally approved $75-million worth of economic aid to the new Nicaraguan government, and, what was surely more important, at the very same time U.S. bankers rescheduled the country's $582-million foreign debt under favorable and even generous terms. The conciliatory posture of the Carter administration, its supporters in Congress, and the financial community quite clearly had no impact whatsoever on unfolding events in Nicaragua, except possibly in a counterproductive fashion.

During this same period, when the United States was straining to conciliate the Sandinistas, they also received $262-million worth of loans from international financial institutions. Private U.S. sources disbursed an additional $45 million in gifts and grants to assist in reconstruction, and equally impressive sums were forthcoming from Western European governments, churches, and private relief organizations. Meanwhile, the government in Managua, far from remaining nonaligned, was supporting the Soviets at the United Nations and elsewhere on issues where Moscow could normally count on the backing only of its most faithful followers—namely, on the questions of Afghanistan, Kampuchea, and China.

The illusions which a self-effacing U.S. policy inevitably nourished in the Sandinista directorate came to an abrupt end in January 1981, when the Carter administration, having already transferred $65 million in aid, suspended further disbursements in its final days to protest Nicaraguan shipments of arms to the Salvadoran rebels. The Reagan administration went further still. It began training anti-Sandinista exiles, and by the end of 1982 hit-and-run attacks, launched from bases in neighboring Honduras, were becoming increasingly common. The United States permanently canceled any further economic aid, opposed new Nicaraguan loan applications, and canceled the country's quota of sugar imports. By 1983, several thousand U.S. troops were engaged in "training" exercises in Honduras, and a massive naval and

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intelligence presence was dispatched to the area.

Even before the full U.S. reaction to Sandinista policy was in evidence, Managua announced (in March 1981) that its armed force would be expanded to 30,000, making it by far the largest in the region and twice the size of the National Guard under Somoza. The presence of rebel commandos operating on the Atlantic coast was used as a pretext to "relocate" the Miskito Indians under exceedingly cruel, if not genocidal, conditions. Growing unrest over economic policies, censorship, and the harassment of opponents led to widespread domestic turmoil. In April 1982, Edén Pastora, who as "Commander Zero" had been one of the greatest heroes of the anti-Somoza revolution, broke with his former comrades over their failure to fulfill their promises of "political pluralism and the practice of free elections with respect for individual rights." From exile in Costa Rica, he called upon his fellow-citizens to overthrow a regime of "traitors and assassins."

While many critics in the United States and elsewhere may be willing to acknowledge that it was the Sandinistas who turned away the friendly overtures of the Carter administration, they regard the stepped-up countermeasures of the Reagan administration as disproportionate and tending to strengthen the hard-liners among the nine *comandantes* who now rule Nicaragua. This position has a superficial plausibility, but those who hold it must still deal with two inconvenient facts. First, in April 1982 Nicaragua was tendered an eight-point U.S. plan which would have ended military training of exiles, resumed economic aid, and reduced U.S. military presence in the area. All the Sandinistas had to do was to make good their promise to the OAS of nonalignment and free elections, and to cease meddling in the affairs of their neighbors. The offer was haughtily rejected. Second, Venezuela, which originally opposed the termination of U.S. aid as precipitous and which continued to disburse assistance on its own—in this case, oil shipments at very generous prices under very convenient terms of repayment—found that its leverage was no greater; in fact, the Venezuelans' counsels of moderation were so harshly turned aside by the Sandinistas that in 1983 they began quietly to assist opposition parties and trade unions in Nicaragua.

At this point, the Nicaraguan controversy in the United States has gone beyond debate over who is responsible for the present situation to the propriety or convenience of supporting—at first covertly, then semi-covertly, and perhaps eventually openly—the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries, or contras. It is true that Congress, after a series of wafer-thin majorities, finally reversed itself and ended that aid in June, but since the cutoff was more of a defeat on parliamentary tactics than a definitive judgment on the policy itself, the issue will in all probability remain to vex the 1984-85 legislative season and indeed those beyond it.

Some objections to this policy are wholly legalistic: critics point to the U.S. Neutrality Act and long-standing commitments under various OAS treaties not to intervene in the affairs of member states. If the aim of foreign policy is for the United States to demonstrate its adherence to the rule of law above all other considerations, including the right to counter the illegal activities of other parties, then such prohibition should be observed literally and aid to the contras should be immediately terminated. But this should be done in the clear prospect of no other favorable outcome than, at best, a momentary public-relations victory: the United States might claim some position of virtue in debate at international forums, and the Sandinistas would have to find new ways of blaming Washington for all that ails their country. Neither of these satisfactions is likely to alter the situation on the ground, where on the contrary a cutoff of aid to the insurgents would enable the Sandinistas further to consolidate their hold on power at home and would free them for more extensive activities elsewhere.

A second objection to the policy of aiding the contras is that it purportedly places the United States in league with the darkest elements of the Nicaraguan past, the old National Guard, which served for decades as the watchdog (and bully-boy) of the Somoza dynasty. These are men whom Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill has colorfully labeled "murderers, marauders, and rapists."

Actually, there are three different contra forces —the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force), the ARDE (Democratic Revolutionary Action), and the FARN (Nicaraguan Armed Revolutionary Forces). The FDN comes closest to justifying Speaker O'Neill's remark, since it is officered by former Guardsmen and commanded by former Guard General Enrique Bermúdez. Even so, as Richard Millett, a veteran student (and critic) of the Nicaraguan military, has pointed out in the Carnegie study, Bermúdez does not fully fit the *somocista* mold. He was "viewed by Somoza as too popular with the troops and not sufficiently committed to the Somoza family," Millett writes, and during the last years of the dictatorship he was consigned to virtual "diplomatic exile" in the United States and Japan. Consequently, he had no connection with the atrocities associated with Somoza's final years of power.

The ARDE, on the other hand, is led by Edén Pastora, and officered not by ex-Guardsmen but by ex-Sandinistas. In fact, these people are the "democratic Left" the United States is always being urged to support in Latin America; in this particular incarnation, however, such democratic leftism provokes discomfort and aversion in its North American counterpart. Ironically, far from being puppets of the CIA, Pastora and his men have pointedly distanced themselves from it, and

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are reliably reported to be distrusted by the Reagan administration. As for the tiny FARN, it is of minor importance; though its leader Fernando Chamorro and his lieutenants are undoubtedly conservative, they have no ties to the Somoza dynasty or the old National Guard.

This is certainly a more complex picture than Speaker O'Neill has painted; and when one examines the base of these movements, the picture becomes more complex still. FDN draws its fighting force—in some estimates as much as 10,000 men—from peasants, small landowners, and shopkeepers who resent the Sandinistas for religious or ideological reasons. Many, Millett reports, are Miskito Indians "reacting to Sandinista actions which have disrupted their traditional pattern of living, destroyed their homes, and transformed them into bitter refugees." ARDE's small army—about 2,000 combatants—is also an amalgam of Miskito Indians, veterans of the 1978-79 civil war against Somoza, and civilians active in the struggle against the old dictatorship, notably Alfonso Robelo.

Clearly, whatever differences may exist at the top, at the level of the rank-and-file the contras are not fighting and dying to enthrone a new Somoza, or even to obtain veterans' pensions from the CIA (as if such things existed). While the work of the FDN would be more difficult without "covert" U.S. aid, the example of ARDE strongly suggests that for the Sandinistas this is a problem which even in the absence of U.S. involvement will not go away.

Finally, it is often said that the contras are not really fighting, as they claim, to compel the Sandinistas to live up to their promises to the OAS, or (as the U.S. government additionally claims) to interrupt arms traffic to neighboring countries, but are rather attempting to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. When and if this happens, it is added, the differences between the FDN and the ARDE will make the country ungovernable. Oddly enough, this view is advanced by people who only yesterday saw nothing improbable in an alliance between Sandinistas and Nicaraguan democrats, and who today are likely to commend a coalition government in El Salvador between the Christian Democrats and the FMLN.

As it happens, however, the contras have repeatedly stated that they will lay down their arms if and when the Sandinistas permit genuinely free elections and open the political process so that all elements of the opposition may freely organize and campaign. (The elections now announced for the fall clearly do not meet these criteria.) The Sandinistas need not even believe in the contras' sincerity to test their offer: were they to do what the contras have asked, there would be no possibility of the Reagan administration's successfully reviving in Congress the aid program to the FDN, and the contras themselves would suffer massive defections from their ranks. It is entirely possible that even now the Sandinistas would win such elections, but in a subsequent political order in which the opposition had a legitimate role they would have to accept some of the restraints characteristic of pluralistic political systems. This is admittedly an unlikely outcome, but less likely still in the absence of the kinds of pressures which the contras are uniquely positioned to apply.

V

THE internal political problems of El Salvador and Nicaragua would be infinitely less vexing for the United States if they had no larger implications for our foreign policy or for the strategic balance generally. Of course, that they have no such implications is precisely what many critics of U.S. policy have been insisting all along—from the prestige press and the religious lobbies in the United States to the Contadora countries (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama) in Latin America and most of the signatories to the Inter-American Dialogue. In their view, the United States has made a small problem large by artificially placing it in the context of the "East-West struggle."

This view would carry somewhat greater weight were it not advanced by many who habitually doubt the relevance of the "East-West" struggle to other and more central theaters of world politics. But the real problem with it, as Morris Rothenberg points out in the Carnegie study, is that it requires us to ignore the most basic fact of *Soviet* foreign policy, which is that Moscow believes that *all* international problems impinge upon the superpower struggle. In Soviet thinking, Central America figures as the "strategic rear" of the United States; keeping it in turmoil or ultimately converting it into a security threat could significantly detract from the ability of the U.S. to meet Soviet challenges elsewhere in the world. It is entirely understandable that the Soviets have not made much of this in their public statements. As Rothenberg writes,

> Moscow has consistently muted the East-West aspects. . . . Indeed, the Soviets deny that the USSR, Cuba, or Nicaragua are involved militarily in El Salvador, presumably so as not to lend credence to administration arguments about the nature of these conflicts or to provide justification for increased U.S. intervention.

The Soviet strategy dictates a different short-term policy for El Salvador, where the outcome is still in doubt, from Nicaragua, where it appears more secure. In El Salvador the Soviets have chosen for the moment to remain in the background, steering the revolutionaries toward third-party sources of arms—other members of the Eastern bloc, Vietnam, or Ethiopia, utilizing Cuba as the point of transshipment through Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, they have made fewer efforts to disguise their presence, and in fact since 1979 they have moved rapidly to strengthen their relation-

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ship with the Sandinistas' military, intelligence, and security agencies. A recent defector from Nicaraguan intelligence, for example, reported that the security forces are now equipped with Soviet arms; that there are 100 Soviet tanks now in Nicaragua; and that 80 MIG's are waiting in Cuba while the Nicaraguans who will fly them are being trained in Bulgaria. He also claimed that the Sandinistas had received radar-guided and heat-seeking ground-to-air missiles.

Whatever the precise configuration of Soviet arms shipments to Nicaragua, the state-to-state relationship is beyond all doubt. In March 1980—during the period when the Carter administration was avidly courting the new regime—Comandante Daniel Ortega signed an agreement in Moscow for Soviet repair and use of the Pacific port of San Juan del Sur. (Such agreements elsewhere, Rothenberg remarks, "have opened the way to use of these facilities for naval surveillance and military purposes.") Since then it has been authoritatively reported that there are 70 Soviet advisers in all aspects of state security, along with 400 Cubans, 40 to 50 East Germans, and 20 to 25 Bulgarians. The FSLN has signed party-to-party agreements with East Germany, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia; affiliated with all major international Communist front organizations; and joined InterSputnik, the Soviet-controlled telecommunications network. Nicaragua has also obtained observer status in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA), which puts it on a par with "socialist" countries like Yugoslavia or "socialist-oriented" states such as Angola, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia. Interestingly, for several months in 1982 Soviet journals referred to Nicaragua as a "people's democracy"—a term normally reserved for the bloc states of Eastern Europe.

None of this is meant to discount the role of the Cubans—indeed, without them the Soviets would have to make their presence more visible and obvious in places where it is currently inexpedient to do so. In El Salvador, it was Castro who unified five contending guerrilla factions into the FMLN-FDR in 1979 by leveraging promises of arms, economic assistance, and training of cadres; a similar process has been reported in Guatemala and Honduras in 1982. The Cubans are also the Nicaraguans' primary source of political advice, military and intelligence training, and access to the international terror network; some 8,000 of them are now at work in that country, and not—as is often suggested—principally to heal the sick or teach people to read. Finally, the Cubans provide a legitimizing myth that the Sandinista revolution is but part of a chain of "Hispanic" revolts against "Anglo-Saxon" world domination, which in spite of obvious distortions of fact plays equally well in Madrid, Buenos Aires, and now in New York and parts of the Southwestern United States.

All of this suggests remarkable subtlety and tactical prudence on the part of Soviet strategists. But it is very strange conduct indeed from a superpower supposedly uninterested and uninvolved in the Central American struggle. Obviously the Soviets did not invent the economic and social crisis which currently afflicts the region, but in their absence that crisis would be infinitely more manageable. To imagine, however, that the problems of Central America fester in isolation from the larger currents of world politics requires a studied neglect both of what the Soviets themselves have written about the region and what the evidence shows they are willing to do to advance their interests within it.

VI

Most critics of present U.S. policy in Central America advocate some kind of multilateral diplomatic solution, in which the Contadora countries, the United States, and, in some scenarios, Spain, France, and Cuba would negotiate a regional settlement. Given the diversity of interests which would have to be harmonized, it is difficult to imagine what that agreement would look like, much less who would enforce it—unless one imagines that all nations are created equal in power and influence, that ideology counts for nothing in international relations, and that all treaties are self-enforcing. Some people do in fact believe all of these things, and during the Carter administration they proved it by ultimately consigning the fate of Nicaragua to the Organization of American States. Just why that method should work now when it did not work under far more auspicious circumstances five years ago is a deep mystery. But perhaps what is really being proposed is the withdrawal of the United States from the Caribbean Basin and a thinly-disguised military and diplomatic defeat in our oldest area of security concern.

No doubt many of the same people would sincerely regret such an outcome. They advocate a "multilateral" way out of the Central American labyrinth only because they believe—as I.M. Destler puts it at the very end of the Carnegie study—that our present course will inevitably lead to "what almost everyone still opposes, deployment of U.S. combat troops in Central America." This is an argument which on its very face is supposed to silence objections to the various utopian proposals making the rounds of the study commissions, congressional committees, and op-ed pages.

It is not an argument to be taken lightly, but given the current environment of public opinion in the United States, combined with the institutional restraints now imposed by the War Powers Act, there is not much chance that troops will actually be deployed. If it does happen nonetheless, it may have an impact far different from the one intended; indeed, Guillermo Ungo of the FMLN-FDR recently told a visitor to his

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Mexican refuge that for him, such an eventuality would lead to a wholly satisfactory outcome—the "Lebanon-ization," as he called it, of El Salvador.

Having nearly foreclosed the option of covert action, are we to discard as well not merely the use of military force but even its threat? In that case, the task of U.S. diplomacy, at least in the Third World, would be limited to disbursing largesse—in large quantities to friends, but also in large quantities to adversaries, in the hope of "influencing" them favorably. If even that failed to produce the desirable outcome, the United States could still be blamed (or could still blame itself) for not giving enough aid, for not giving it rapidly enough, or for attaching too many conditions to it. Meanwhile, the Soviets and the Cubans could reap the benefits of a new international division of labor, in which they would do what they do best—making revolution—while the guilt-ridden West also does what it does best—paying for it. This is a recipe not merely for failure but for suicide.

Over the last four years a curious cloud of historicism has settled over discussion of Central America, as if the world were created around 1965 and Vietnam were our only experience of situations of this kind. In his recent book *The Real Peace*, Richard Nixon recalls that in 1947, when President Truman was attempting to resist the Communist seizure of power in Greece, Congress was flooded with an orchestrated campaign of correspondence demanding that "food, not arms" be delivered to the beleaguered government of that country. Had Congress taken that advice, the outcome in Greece would have been very different—and not merely for the monarchy (which has since disappeared), the military (which has been returned to the barracks), or the wealthy (now subjected to new taxes). Without the action taken by Truman, it is simply inconceivable that Greece would have a democratic government today, much less one which is both socialist and independent of the Soviet Union.

IT WILL be said that Greece is not El Salvador; self-evidently, it is not. But neither is El Salvador Vietnam. The Central American labyrinth has its own, unique ground plan. We may not find our way out easily or quickly, or even under terms which fully satisfy us, much less our Central American neighbors. But we should be clear about what we are seeking, what outcomes are most probable, and what their human, political, and strategic costs will be. There is no shortcut; those who suggest that there is one are deceiving us, and probably themselves as well.

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Philosophy & the Disappearing Self

William Barrett

THE 19th is still a century we are struggling to extricate ourselves from. It has thus something of the ambiguity of a parental image for us, and our grasp of it, in consequence, is still somewhat uncertain and confused. It was, for example, a century of quite overwhelming materialism and positivism, and with these doctrines the notion of mind or consciousness receives very short shrift. Yet in philosophy itself, the first part of the century was to witness an almost bacchanalian celebration of consciousness in the form of German idealism, and in its principal figure, Hegel.

To be sure, Hegel and idealism are subjects that have fallen pretty much by the wayside. The dominant Anglo-American philosophy of the last fifty years, for example, hardly betrays any acquaintance at all with idealism and its contributions. The tide has simply moved away from any concern with the human subject and subjectivity. Yet there are signs here and there that we may have to pay attention to Hegel once again, if only to correct some of the ideas about history that have become dominant among our professional historians.

These historians practice what they call "social history," which aims to describe the routine external behavior of a society. As a reaction against an earlier overdose of ideology, when large and sweeping abstractions were thrown too easily about, this emphasis is perhaps understandable. But surely it goes too far in its rejection of mind when it excludes from the concern of the historian the events of intellectual culture, the struggle for and about ideas. We get, as it were, a kind of mindless behaviorism transposed from psychology to the field of history. And it is here that we have to recall the figure of Hegel, the first and greatest philosopher of history, who insisted that history was primarily a history of the human mind.

Only a conscious animal has a history because it can recall the past and seek to make something significantly different for the future. Only the power of consciousness and the change it can bring deliver history from the aimless and monotonous repetition of the chronicle. In the scale of human consciousness, those primitive peoples are lowest who have not yet risen to the level of history. The Greeks spoke of man as the rational animal; following Hegel, perhaps we should speak of man as the historical animal.

The principle at issue cuts both ways. If human consciousness is essential to history, if indeed the change and development of consciousness are what essentially constitute history, the corollary is also true: history is essential to consciousness. Human consciousness will differ from one epoch to another. And here Hegel's boldness and originality as a philosopher come to the fore: he speaks, for example, of a *Weltgeist* and a *Zeitgeist*, a world-spirit and a time-spirit. Because of the sweep of his language, some readers have taken him to be lapsing here into metaphor and mythology. Not at all. He is referring to something well known to anyone who has delved even a little bit into history: that the mentality of one historical epoch may differ very much from that of another, and that as individual minds we are very much creatures of our time and its particular historical climate.

Consider works of art. We do not need very much expertise in the history of art to be able to situate a given work in its approximate historical period. Somehow the individual work carries the look of its time about it. It bears all the pressures of its period, however individual and rebellious the artist may have wished to be. And perhaps the more he seeks to escape them, the more crudely his work will bear the historic marks of his period.

Art and the artist are under no special dispensation here. We are all, as conscious humans, under the pressure of time and history and we carry the marks of these deep in our persons as, conversely, the work of art brings them eloquently to the surface. Nor is this historical part of our being something that holds only for those who may be gifted with some special "historical consciousness." The ordinary man in the street, the man packed next to his neighbor on the subway,

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belong to their epoch as much as the savant pondering the meaning of history. The consciousness of the ordinary man today, whether he is aware of it or not, is different from that of the medieval peasant. We sometimes refer to the consciousness of this ordinary man today as undifferentiated and ahistorical. In fact, it is not. We have to think of the individual mind as a bubble on a vast sea. It somehow retains its identity, but it is not separated from the surrounding ocean, whose waters flow through and around it, and perpetually sustain it.

Given this immersion in history, what becomes our human task in confronting it? How does the individual self realize itself within the toils of the historic process? Hegel's answer is radically different from the traditional philosophic attitude usually associated with Plato and Platonism. The realization of the self is not an escape from time or the historic process; we do not realize the fullness of the self in a timeless vision that delivers us from history. On the contrary, since we are condemned in any case to be historical, we had best strive to be deliberately and consciously so. The task of human consciousness is to gather into itself all the significant strands of its history and make them fully explicit. The authentic consciousness is not one that seeks an escape from history but one that brings history to its culmination in consciousness.

Hegel called this kind of consciousness concrete mind. Perhaps he would have been more accurate to call it encyclopedic mind.

What Hegel does, in short, is to single out the kind of mind that particularly engages him as a professor: the mind of the *Gelehrter*, the savant, the self-consciously learned man. But the reality of consciousness transcends any of its special types. Mind or consciousness is real wherever we find it, even in its most humdrum and ordinary manifestations. Indeed, it is with these more humble and ordinary facts that we may renew a contact with consciousness that a more cerebral philosophy has lost. Such, in any case, was the revolt that Kierkegaard declared against Hegel and the philosophers a little more than a century ago; and with that revolt he launched the philosophy that has come to be known as existentialism.

Unfortunately, as we shall see, by one of those ironic twists of history, certain contemporary versions of that philosophy have reversed field and become as destructive of the individual and individual consciousness as the rest of our culture.

DESPITE all the publicity that has surrounded existentialism, an adequate evaluation of Kierkegaard has hardly arrived among our philosophers. For one thing, he seems to speak with a voice that is alien to theirs. He is not a philosopher but a religious writer—something of a prophet, perhaps a religious poet. And yet, I believe, his central message should be of the utmost significance for philosophy and philosophers. How is this seeming paradox possible?

First of all, we have to notice that there is something of a paradox inherent in the notion of "Christian philosophy" itself. In one sense, there is no such thing as Christian philosophy at all. Christian faith falls outside of philosophy—either above or below, or however you wish to situate it, but in any case beyond philosophy. The advent of this faith marked a revolutionary break with the philosophic consciousness of the pagan world.

Yet there is the fact of Christian experience, which the philosopher cannot blithely ignore. Strictly speaking, philosophy is supposed to take cognizance of all kinds of human experience, even if the particular philosopher has a personal distaste for one or the other kind. In the absence of Christian belief, the philosopher may not be able to enter into all modes of Christian experience, but he must struggle to take stock of them as best he can, even if at something of a distance. Above all, he should not dogmatically deny that such experience exists. Moreover, there is one central area of human experience that, whether we are believers or not, we all share—and that is the search for personal salvation. We may understand this salvation differently, and we may not even choose to use the word itself, but the fact remains that this struggle lies at the center of the self. And here Kierkegaard may be taken as a profound and illuminating guide.

At the center of the self, then, lies a passionate self-concern. This has nothing to do with egotism, for the self-concern could be that of the saint struggling to sink his own private will in God's. The point is that at the center of the self lies a vital passion, not some inert mental stuff or amalgam of perceptions. Consider what a radical departure Kierkegaard's is from some of the older theories of mind—for example, how different it is from the view of the empiricist David Hume that mind is merely an inert aggregate or heap of sense-impressions. Kierkegaard supplies the vital spark, and in the long run, as we shall see, he is more empirical, more true to experience, than the empiricists.

Kierkegaard deepens the note of subjectivity beyond these earlier thinkers. This does not mean that he adds any new epistemological doubts to those of Descartes or Hume—doubts which serve only to relativize and weaken the stance of the ego as it confronts the world. On the contrary, he is concerned with strengthening the self in the face of the world. Or, to put it another way, he is interested in *subjectivity* as an *existential* fact and not in *subjectivism* as a problem for the theory of knowledge. The distinction here is central, and we may pause for one more moment to try to fix it as clearly as we can.

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WHEREVER there is consciousness, there is a point of view from which things are seen, and hence subjectivity of one kind or another. We cannot imagine a consciousness which is just consciousness, but not the consciousness of some being or other, whether bird, bat, fish, or human. Consciousness and subjectivity are thus coextensive. This conclusion is forced upon us by an examination of consciousness itself, a purely phenomenological conclusion that seems emotionally neutral to any kind of human pathos. Thus we have not yet arrived at the concrete subjectivity which Kierkegaard is after. We have to see this consciousness in its existential situation.

There is, for example, the fact of death. The conscious subject comes into a world where people die, and he among them. He exists, then, in a world where anxiety, in one form or another and in one degree or another, must be the common lot of all. How to cope with it becomes the personal problem of each individual self, whatever portion of fate it draws. The struggle of the self to preserve itself takes many forms of strategy, sometimes a desperate flight from oneself. It might be said, paradoxically but truly, that sometimes we are never more absorbed in the self than when we are plotting desperate and devious devices of escape from that self.

On this matter Kierkegaard offers us some of the most penetrating and eloquent pages in the world's literature. I refer to his famous description of the stages of human existence: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. We need not go into detail here to recapitulate the stages, or levels, of human existence; it is sufficient for our purposes to notice their general direction—from a desperate effort to escape from the self to a final surrender and commitment. The strategies of escape may be subtle and devious—we lose ourselves in sensation, pleasure, or the refinements of art and beauty; or perhaps in philosophy in its more grandiose abstractions, like the world-spirit—but these strategies fail in the end, they collapse in despair, and we come back to the humble self that we are and that we cannot escape. We have to be who we are, however we may seek eventually to transform ourselves.

Those of us who profess to be Christian might do well here to remember that the central figure of the Christian religion is a man nailed to a cross. In one way or another, we are all nailed to the cross of ourselves. This is a stark and brutal image, I realize, to throw before people who are likely to be saturated with self-help pamphlets or even taking expensive courses designed to develop a new self, or a new personality, that they may present to the world. I would not in the least wish to decry these impulses toward self-improvement, only to point out that they must all start from the recognition of that concrete and humble self we are. And if these efforts toward change and self-transformation should be successful, they will also return us to a concrete self, however changed, that we shall have to learn to suffer and abide in turn.

We have here passed to a deeper degree of subjectivity when we deal with a self that makes decisions about itself, and seeks to change itself or its way of life. At its most elementary stage, subjectivity is merely the essential accompaniment of consciousness as such, any consciousness: to be aware is to be conscious from some point of view or other. But we pass to a more concrete level of subjectivity when we deal with an actual subject who is possessed by self-concern, and who makes decisions about himself and his life. Nor are these decisions merely peripheral; on the contrary, they can enter into the very substance of that person's life and make it what it is. We are here at the farthest remove from the empiricist view of David Hume that the self is merely a passive bundle of sense-impressions; an aggregate of sense-impressions does not make decisions about itself. And the same point might be made against our latter-day behaviorists who would seek to treat the human self as nothing but a bundle of behavior patterns; a bundle of behavior patterns does not confront itself decisively in self-questioning and seek its change.

Surely, then, Kierkegaard would seem to have brought a new and penetrating light to our understanding of the self, and one would have expected subsequent thinkers to have followed the leads he had thrown out. To be sure, he came to be acknowledged as one of the founding spirits in the existential mode of thought in philosophy, and existentialism became a movement that attracted much attention in recent years both here and abroad. But this notoriety does not mean that appropriate notice was taken of the message of the founder. On the contrary, by one of those ironic twists in which intellectual history abounds, the dominant influence of existentialism has moved in a direction opposite to Kierkegaard—toward a disintegration of the self, which Kierkegaard struggled so energetically to hold together.

Here, perhaps, existentialism was merely carried along in that vast and powerful movement of modern society toward the disintegration of the individual. Certainly, we have heard the words often enough—depersonalization, fragmentation, and the rest—from our concerned critics, so that it should come as no surprise to us that modern mass society, simply by its size and impersonality, tends to absorb and obliterate the individual. But what should surprise us is that philosophers and intellectuals should construct theories which, in their intricate and sometimes fanciful ways, serve really to abet this depersonalizing process.

This is a serious charge, and we have now to offer an outline in documentation of it. We shall

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proceed backward, from the later and more widespread movement, to the originating or at least contributing source in thinkers like Sartre and Heidegger.

In France any intellectual cause that attains sufficient notoriety is likely to end as a literary movement. The practice has its faults; the issues can sometimes be overdramatized or otherwise distorted when they enter the literary arena. Yet on the whole this French habit has its value: we are more likely to see some of the human implications of a doctrine if we have turned it over to literary expression and the literary imagination.

The literary cause in France that has attracted most attention in the past two decades is the critical movement known as deconstructionism. Originally, the deconstructionists brought forth a special mode of literary criticism; but since literary criticism, if systematically carried out, entails a theory of literature, deconstructionism has become a whole philosophy in itself, though pursued usually for the destruction of philosophy. It has attracted a certain following in the United States, particularly among academics who are attracted by what is recherché and fashionable.

As the name implies, deconstructionism is a method of dissecting and disassembling a literary text. In a sense, of course, all literary interpretation does such dissecting to one degree or another; but the degree, in the case of the deconstructionists, amounts to a difference in kind from all the usual forms of literary criticism. The deconstructionists claim as an intellectual predecessor Ferdinand de Saussure, founder of a science of linguistics or semiotics; and linguistic or semiotic considerations bulk large for them. Thus the poem, or other literary work, is to be seen first and foremost as a linguistic fact—a fact within the network of human language.

The poem is a piece of human language. Hardly news, you might say. But everything here depends on the thoroughness and completeness with which we follow through on this lead. The literary work is to be taken merely as one item in that vast network of signs that constitute our human existence. The individual work, the work in its individuality, thus becomes like a tiny atoll lost in the vastness of the ocean. The poem as we usually recognize it disappears into the network of signs into which it must be reabsorbed if we are to see it rightly. The poet also disappears; as an individual, or even as an individual aesthetic voice, he vanishes into that vast free-floating matrix of signs. Indeed, the deconstructionists would have us give up the notion of the self altogether; we have simply to learn to "desubstantialize" our thinking. And this work of desubstantialization they see as one of the primary tasks of our culture.

The word "desubstantialization" is a significant cue here. It indicates that the deconstructionists are against the notion or category of substance. In this, of course, they are not alone; most of our literate and philosophic culture runs in the same direction. Even two very significant philosophers like Whitehead and Heidegger, otherwise so very different, are united in their suspicion or open condemnation of substance. It is as if we had all been traumatized by Descartes, and in flight from him were in pursuit of anything and everything that is insubstantial.

In the case of literary analysis this process of desubstantialization has some curious and far-reaching effects. Certain simple lyrical poems seem to express their subject so clearly and directly that there appears to be no question what they are about. Robert Frost's poem, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," is about what its title indicates: the poet stops by a woods to watch the snow falling. But hold a moment: we must not assume so quickly that the references of language are so clear and easy to spot. Indeed, for the deconstructionist, the referential aspects of language—the claim that language refers to definite things, objects, people—are not the central fact about language. More important in the case of any symbol are the multiple links it establishes with all other symbols within the whole symbolic matrix. Thus Frost's "woods" may not be woods at all, in the simple sense of the plain reader. The poet speaks of them as "lovely, dark and deep," and he would linger with them if he were free, but he has "promises to keep," and he must go on with his journey. The "woods" here could be anything dark and inviting—perhaps the female genitalia to whose seductiveness the poet would, but for other reasons cannot, yield, etc., etc.

We are thus launched on an absurd travesty of an "interpretation"—no more absurd, however, than many that circulate in critical circles today. Now, a certain type of crude and doctrinaire Freudian, if we can imagine him, might insist that this sexual interpretation is at bottom the real and true one. The deconstructionist, however, is far more subtle—we must at least give him credit for that. He would not argue that the Freudian interpretation is wrong as such; it is one of the countless possible views, all equally valid, that we might take of the poem. The error of the Freudian is that he "substantializes," that he thinks of one kind of interpretation as *the* meaning of the work. On the contrary, the poem means whatever symbolic links we can establish between it and the total network of human language. With the deconstructionist, in short, we are in a world of total relativism where anything goes.

I do not believe this is an exaggeration. The point is that if you abandon the notion of substance—that there are definite things, and that

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language, at least in some of its uses, can and does clearly refer to them—then you float in a sea of indefiniteness where anything goes. To have meanings at all does require a certain degree of fixity—of persistent identity—in the objects of discourse.

The issue becomes more subtle—and perhaps also more significant—when one comes to the identity of the poet. If we are readers of poetry, we do not read only isolated single poems, we read a sizable body of the poet's work, particularly if we like the poet, and his poetry means much to us. He becomes an individual and continuing voice to us, a poetic presence and a poetic identity. This poetic identity is not altogether the same as his identity as an actual person; in life the poet may have had rough edges of which the poetry might leave us unsuspecting. But poet and man are not altogether unrelated; the poetic voice—the poetic identity—is after all a part of the total identity of that human being. At a certain point in his development, for example, the poetry of Yeats begins to speak with a different voice—more simple, direct, and powerful. T.S. Eliot refers to the change as a "miracle of development." One suspects that this development was not altogether independent of certain changes in the life of Yeats the man—his aging and the passing of time, the death and loss of certain friends, the loss of one wild love and the finding of a more stable one, but perhaps above all the ceaseless meditation on life and its meaning.

In any case, the point is that a great deal is lost from our appreciation of poetry if we lose the sense of the poet as a continuing presence and voice in his work. If we are not always priggishly academic in our responses, then we may even experience the poet in his poem as one human soul speaking to another, to our self. But the deconstructionists' doctrine would make any experience like this impossible, for they flatly deny the self. Language is thus cut off from its human base, and becomes a free-floating system of signs. Without a reference to this human base, the self, deconstructionism becomes merely another manifestation of the nihilism that in so many guises, subtle and otherwise, pervades our culture.

From its generally intemperate and reckless tone, one might conclude that deconstructionism is just another Bohemian product of Left Bank Paris, still eager after all these years to shock the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it has drawn some quite solemn literary scholars in its wake, and it does have some serious philosophic sponsorship. Thus one of the significant figures among its leaders is the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who is, among other things, a serious student of Heidegger. And here a significant question of philosophic derivation arises. What is the connection, is there one, between the philosophy of Heidegger, so solemn and earnest in tone, and this nihilistic doctrine of literature? Is it the case that in our culture even the most serious products of the human spirit harbor a nihilistic tendency? Are we that far gone into human decline?

The fact is that there is a more specific connection between the doctrine of the deconstructionists and the philosophy of Heidegger, and for our understanding of that philosophy I think it important to grasp this connection. But for this purpose we have, as it were, to proceed backward through the figure of Jean-Paul Sartre, remembering that it was largely through him that existentialism entered French intellectual life.

It was a unique combination of gifts that enabled Sartre to become the primary spokesman for the movement of existentialism, and to provide the eloquence to project that movement to the center of the French intellectual scene. On the one hand, he was gifted with the power of philosophical imagination—a power that enabled him to paint the human condition in terms of bold contrasts. The metaphysical situation of man, in Sartre's hands, has something melodramatic about it; and Sartre is willing to exploit melodrama to the hilt when the opportunity presents itself. And if the melodrama sometimes oversimplifies the philosophical issues, it can nevertheless also make a page of otherwise abstruse philosophy exciting.

The other part of his gift was an unusual sensitivity to the historical situation of the particular time, a sensitivity to what the French call *le moment*, the moment. For the youth of Sartre's generation the historical moment was the rise of Nazism, World War II, the defeat and collapse of the French bourgeois republic, the humiliating years of the Occupation by the Nazis, and finally the resurgence through the French Resistance. Here was a sequence of actual historical events that, to an imagination like Sartre's, had the unity of a philosophical drama. And the central theme of this drama, the loss and the retrieval of human liberty, was to become the central theme of his whole philosophy. Indeed, liberty is taken by him as the central or defining fact of the human condition: we cannot evade it, cannot escape it; we are condemned to be free. Since Sartre says so many other things that are unflattering about us, it is well to remember at least this thing in his favor: that he does make liberty a central fact of human being.

Nevertheless, Sartre's view of human freedom has no connection with the concrete self who is to be free. Indeed, Sartre has no adequate grasp or concept of this concrete self; the result is that this human liberty of ours which he exalts as total can also become demonic and unbalanced. It floats in the void.

A sidelong glance at Sartre in one of his political involvements may tell us a good deal about some of the particular twists of his mind. Thus, this champion of metaphysical liberty never took a persistent stand against the Soviet Union; the

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modern evil he attacks is the Nazi Gestapo, never the Soviet secret police. His reason is that the Soviet Union is, after all, socialist, and socialism represents the positive part of mankind's future. To criticize the Soviet Union would give aid and comfort to the enemies of socialism. Without going into the parts of Sartre's reasoning that are specifically questionable from a political point of view, we note that here he is subordinating the demand for liberty, supposed to be unconditional and absolute, to a single overarching view of history. The unconditional turns out to be conditioned; and in this case, conditioned by an *a-priori* conviction about the ultimate direction of history.

However we may hide from it, Sartre holds, our freedom is always total and absolute: the victim can always say No to the tyrant. To be sure, he may have to give up his life in the process, but that is a power, the ultimate and extreme power, that always lies in our hands. Sartre's is a liberty of extreme situations; the question is whether this view can do justice to the ordinary and everyday situations in which we have to exercise our liberty—always a liberty conditioned by circumstances.

It is revealing in examining a philosopher on the subject of liberty to notice the particular examples of freedom he favors. What are the individuals or types in whom he sees freedom realized? These examples may tell us more about the conditions and circumstances of liberty than his abstract and general theory actually states. The examples Sartre is attracted to are usually rebels, abnormal in one way or another. One such example, and one very close to Sartre's heart, is the writer Jean Genet.

Genet seems almost prefabricated for Sartre's philosophical purposes: a thief, convict, male prostitute, collaborator with the Nazis. Genet represents for Sartre the free and deliberate choice of evil. Every way of life is a choice of the self we are to be; Genet chose himself as evil. He happened also to be a writer of genius, or we might not otherwise be interested in him at all. The discovery of his literary vocation is of a piece with the rest of his life: in prison, in solitary confinement, Genet suddenly found himself writing. The warden confiscated his paper; Genet went on writing with whatever scraps of material he could find about his prison. He had to write, he was not to be thwarted. Was this urge to write simply the result of some deep compulsion or was it a free choice of himself?

Sartre here places himself on the side of freedom. Even the yielding to a compulsion is an act of freedom: it is the choice of our self as the self that submits to that compulsion. The system is dialectically rigged so that freedom can be said to prevail in any case. But is this triumph of liberty merely verbal or is it real?

Genet, for example, had other compulsions besides the drive toward writing. There were the compulsions toward crime and toward homosexuality. Did these enhance or diminish his freedom? The touches of depravity give a certain power of shock to the writing—at least for a while. Thereafter they begin to pall; the compulsions toward sex and crime become obsessive and narrowing. They cut off the author from certain wider ranges of human feeling and sensitivity to which he is altogether unable to respond. Thus the choice of freedom in one direction may very well limit our being and therefore our freedom in another direction. That absolute power of freedom that Sartre celebrates so ecstatically begins to look very conditioned indeed.

It is conditioned in the first place by the character of the individual who is to exert that freedom. What we choose and how much of that choice we may be able to realize are sometimes very different matters. We are limited by the abilities, talents, and powers that make up our character. But at this point Sartre takes his most radical step: he rejects the idea of a definite or fixed self that would limit our liberty. There is no definite human nature or fixed individual character that can be a real bar to our freedom. We are always free to remake the self that seems so persistently to dog our footsteps.

Lest we think this merely a bit of exuberant rhetoric on Sartre's part, he has nailed it down as a fundamental part of his basic philosophic doctrine. Being, he tells us, is divided into two kinds: the being of things (being-in-itself) on the one hand, and on the other, conscious being, or being-for-itself. The being of a thing is inert being; the thing is what it is, no more and no less. A conscious being, on the other hand, is never just what it is: it falls below the level of its capacity, or it reaches out beyond its actual state in expectation. Our consciousness never quite coincides with our being. And if this sounds paradoxical to our ears, the paradox really comes from our own unconscious category mistake in thinking of the being of a conscious person as if it were merely the being of a thing.

Thus the man who declares "I am what I am," in refusing to rise to the challenge of changing himself, is committing a double error: one philosophical, the other human. He is thinking of his own human being as no more than the being of a thing ("I am what I am"); the moral error is that he is practicing bad faith: if he were really to tell the truth, he would say, "I choose to remain as I am." But instead, he chooses to hide from his freedom, and pretend that what is really his own free choice is an unalterable fact of his nature.

What are we to make of all this? No doubt Sartre is a shrewd observer of one fact about our human condition: namely, our desire to escape from the claims of freedom whenever we can by

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one excuse or another. But having granted this, we have to note that his whole scheme is much too tidy and symmetrical, too neatly dualistic. There are things and there are persons, and never the twain shall meet. But our ordinary experience presents us with quite different realities: when we find stability and constancy in a person, we do not ascribe them necessarily to the inertia of a mere thing. On the contrary, the constancy of our being may in fact be a conscious project, deliberately and energetically renewed. Why should stability be taken merely as a sign of the dead hand of inertia?

Sartre wishes to eliminate a fixed or enduring self in order to increase the range of our freedom. With no such stable or enduring self to oppose us we can remake ourselves whenever we choose to. We can be a different self tomorrow from what we are today. The promise of such total freedom sounds heady and exhilarating on first hearing; but very shortly it begins to pall and we find the idea self-defeating. How are we to go about changing ourselves if there are no persisting features of the old self to provide leverage? At the center of the Sartrean self there is only a pure potentiality, which seems at first glance to be potent and overmastering, but in fact floats in the void.

What is happening here (at the heart of modernism) is no less than an attempt to reverse the whole philosophic tradition of the West. This tradition, first expressed in the luminous common sense of Aristotle, had held that actuality is prior to potentiality. Because a thing is actually constituted in a certain way, it will have some definite powers or potentialities. The axe has the power to cut because it actually has a metal blade structured and sharpened in a certain way. The Sartrean may immediately cry that we are here talking about things, and illicitly transposing the thing-mode to all cases of power and act. But in fact we have to deal with conscious human agents in this same straightforward way: because they have certain definite characteristics—of intelligence, character, or whatever—we do say that certain actions are or are not possible to them. Here again, actuality has a priority in being over possibility. Unless we are counting on miracles, we do not expect a sow's ear to turn into a silk purse. Possibilities are circumscribed by the actual nature of the person.

This question of the priority of actuality over potentiality may have a scholastic ring to some ears, and may therefore seem a trivial and remote matter. On the contrary, the question takes us to the heart of modernism and to the philosophy of being in which this modernism finds expression. In the modern era our human powers over nature have been greatly extended. It is only natural, then, that power and possibility should come to assume a more pronounced and dominant role in our thinking—until, indeed, they become dominant marks by which we would understand being itself. But on this central point the crucial figure is not Sartre but his master, Heidegger.

THAT there is anything "insubstantial" about Heidegger's thought, or even that it might in any way point in such a direction, seems to be very plainly contradicted by the solemnity of his text. He writes about death, anxiety, human finitude; and what subjects are more heavy and grave than these? The question remains, however, whether in the end he leaves us something substantial to hold on to.

Solemnity and seriousness, of course, can be quite different qualities, and a thinker can turn out to be solemnly frivolous without being aware of it. But here too we have to grant Heidegger his seriousness. Indeed, he is one of the really serious thinkers of our period—a period in which triviality has almost become an occupational hazard among philosophers. His seriousness lies in the boldness and ambition of his central project, which is nothing less than to reinterpret the meaning of being in a way that is different from the whole tradition of the West. Yet after all these centuries, can we really expect a philosopher to come up with some radically new answer to the ancient but persistent question, What is being? That is the question we shall have to put to Heidegger. But whatever our answer, his real significance may lie elsewhere: namely, that he gives us the meaning of being that is at work in a large part of modern culture. And that is no trivial accomplishment.

Every significant thinker, Heidegger tells us, has one central intuition that runs through all his work, and he himself is no exception. Heidegger does have a single original insight, bold but surprisingly simple, that is basic to all his thinking about being. This insight has to do with the nature of truth. And as we should expect from a thinker of Heidegger's style, it starts with the traditional view that is found in Aristotle or St. Thomas Aquinas.

In this traditional view, truth consists in "correspondence" or "agreement": a statement is true when it agrees or corresponds with fact or reality. Thus I judge that there is a tree outside the window; I look and see that there is indeed a tree there, and my statement, accordingly, is true: it agrees with fact. Heidegger does not disagree with this simple explication of the nature of truth. Indeed, how could he? It is the meaning of truth as it figures in the humblest walks of ordinary life as well as in the more abstract and theoretic assertions of the sciences. Instead, Heidegger pushes his question into the basis, or ground, of this correspondence: how is truth possible? How is it possible that thought and its object can coincide?

His answer here is of such direct and overwhelming simplicity that we are not likely to

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grasp its significance at once. Statement and thing can correspond because there is an open realm in which they can meet. If I am to match statement with thing, there must be this open space where the two can be put together. It is in this realm, or field, of the open that things show themselves, and truth comes to be.

There is nothing esoteric or "mystical" about this field of the open. On the contrary, we live and move through and within it all the time, so much so in fact that we hardly note that it is there. And yet it is only in this open realm that anything like truth can come about. And therefore with it, says Heidegger, we must take up our search for being. We do not begin our study of being with things or substances in the ordinary and traditional way, but with something less substantial yet more pervasive: the open field or region in which such entities manifest themselves.

This is a radical proposal indeed, and there is no doubt of the originality of Heidegger's basic insight. Yet it often happens with a philosopher who has had an original perception that he rides it too intensely and exclusively while shutting off other and more usual points of view. You can go through the history of philosophy and tick off the philosophers who became blinded by the brilliance of their own original insight. And this, I think, is what happened to Heidegger: we do not need an either-or here—either the tradition or his insubstantial approach—but a both-and. His insight should be added to the tradition and not seek to replace it. Otherwise we get a philosophy that tends to become insubstantial and vaporous.

Consider, for example, his treatment of human beings in his greatest work, *Being and Time*. The analysis proceeds by exhibiting the various modes of our being—that is, the ways in which we are in the world. In each of our moods the world is disclosed to us in a certain way, and the way of its disclosure is that particular mode of our being. But then we ask the question: *who* is the being who is undergoing all these various modes of being? (Or, in more traditional language: who is the subject, the I, that underlies or persists through all these varying modes of our being?) And here Heidegger evades us.

Not that he does not have an answer, but his answer is evasive because it merely turns the question back upon itself in an endless circle. The "I" here is not to be understood as a subject, but in Heidegger's expression, as *Ichsein* (I-being), just another mode of being, another way in which we are, along with the others. We are nothing but an aggregate of modes of being, and any organizing or unifying center we profess to find there is something we ourselves have forged or contrived.

Thus there is a gaping hole at the center of our human being—at least as Heidegger describes this being. Consequently, we have in the end to acknowledge a certain desolate and empty quality about his thought, however we may admire the originality and novelty of its construction. Much has been made of the criticism that he lacks an ethics, and that his picture of man is without any significant ethical or moral traits. But how could this be otherwise? How could a being without a center be really ethical?

All of this is not meant to dismiss Heidegger. For he cannot be dismissed; that desolate and empty picture of being he gives us may be just the sense of being that is at work in our whole culture, and we are in his debt for having brought it to the surface. To get beyond him we shall have to live through that sense of being in order to reach the other side.

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Weekends in New York—A Memoir

Henry Roth

April 1939, Saturday night

I WALKED east to Central Park West, and there, across from the park, turned south. It was now 8:30 P.M. I hadn't realized that the many-storied apartment houses along the way were occupied by well-to-do Jews, until I saw a car backing up before one of them, and backing up too hard, so hard it struck the front bumpers of the parked sedan behind quite forcibly. The uniformed doorman came out, and said jocularly: "Boy, are they gonna sue you, are they gonna sue you, Dr. Gottlieb." Unperturbed and smiling, Dr. Gottlieb got out of the vehicle. And I, looking about, saw that most of the people on the avenue appeared to be also Jewish, and, as far as I could judge, affluent.

At 57th Street I turned east, aimlessly, gaze sliding from face to face in the passing crowd. When I reached Broadway, my attention was drawn to quite a large group of people on the northeast corner in front of Weber & Heilbroner's men's furnishings. I crossed the street, and drifted over, and found a comfortable prop to lean against: the parcel drop of the U.S. mail. The crowd had gathered about a cluster of five women and two men. The women wore headdresses made of white muslin or linen, trailing behind their shoulders, like that worn by members of the Red Cross. The men wore street clothes. One, a tall, cadaverous, aging man, with faded rusty hair, carried a Bible; the other, short, wiry, with dark eyes snapping and intense, carried a briefcase as well as a Bible. The women, for all their white headdresses, were unmistakably plebeian. One was a large, Scottish-looking woman with strawy eyelashes, almost colorless, who shut her eyes when she sang; another, with pinched lips and sharp nose, looked Polish; another, a matron and stout, with graying hair, reminded me vaguely of a chambermaid I had seen in a hotel. The fourth, who bore a tambourine, was a Negro woman with very taut, fine brown skin like polished briar. The fifth, a brunette, was quite pretty—and petite. Their backs were turned to me, for they were facing the street, but I saw their faces from time to time as their heads swayed in song. The usual New York crowd had collected, and they stood about amused and nudging one another. I couldn't make out what the evangelists were singing, except that the words God and Jesus resounded again and again from the music of the hymn, the music of some popular tune. The Negro woman led the choir, and her rhythms and husky voice were enough to hold anyone's attention. I thought of my old friend Bill Loem, those months ago—years ago, they seemed now—when we stood in the park in Cincinnati, and listened to that same kind of religious meeting, and his voice had become blurred and harsh when we turned away, and he wept, stalwart of the Communist party, steeled in the struggle, wept out of sheer nostalgia—and never forgave me for having witnessed his tears and his grief, and his betrayal of weakness.

I looked about. Behind the revivalists, in the Weber & Heilbroner show window, gray suits and gray felt hats with braided leather hatbands were on display, and red socks. To the south, across the street, burned the orange neon sign of an auto salesroom: NASH. Cafés and drugstores glared on the crowd. The huge Coca-Cola ad aloft bubbled and glowed. Dimmed headlights of cars passed. All about droned New York's dense, intricate din. A circus wagon, horse-drawn, clattered by. The ceaseless Saturday night throng streamed in both directions toward the group that had gathered on the sidewalk, like a solid eddy about the little cluster, some filtering through, some skirting, some tarrying out of curiosity, augmenting the bystanders. Two thousand years ago, I mused, that little knot of evangelists might have been enrolled among the martyrs, might have been the founders of the church. But now, what? Fanatics, forlorn fanatics. Still, it was interesting to wonder what that gilded lady would have looked like —she wore a black hat with the high white peak like an ice-cream sundae, and was wrathfully el-

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HENRY ROTH is the author of *Call It Sleep*, which the English critic Walter Allen named as "one of the great achievements of American writing in this century." Originally published in 1934, this novel about a boy growing up in an immigrant Jewish family was reprinted in 1960 and became a best-seller four years later in a paperback edition. After *Call It Sleep* Mr. Roth wrote no other book, for reasons he explained in an interview published in the August 1977 COMMENTARY under the title, "On Being Blocked & Other Literary Matters." The present memoir is adapted from a work in progress, *Mercy of a Rude Stream*. Copyright © 1984 by Henry Roth.

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bowing the little troupe of hymn-singers out of her way as she tried to get through—what she would have looked like, elbowing the sainted apostles on the streets of Jerusalem.

Poor nuts, I thought, some new sect, and decided to move on; but then I remembered I had nowhere to go, and so changed my mind, and stayed. Strange, how I disliked watching this kind of spectacle. It embarrassed me terribly: humanity exhibiting its pathetic manias in public. I forced myself to stay on. I thought: well, see it through. The crowd was so scornful and cynical, something might happen; something might happen that would bring grist to my mill; it was my duty to stay on and see it happen. Besides, there was a certain tension in the air. Blasé New Yorkers usually ignored this sort of thing, but this crowd was hostile, had deliberately stopped to jeer. I could feel my own quickening pulse responding to the latent resistance of the onlookers.

Presently, the singing came to a close, and the large Scottish-looking woman came to the center of the circle and began to preach. She quoted from the Gospels, proclaimed the imminence of Christ's second coming and the end of the world. Her delivery was poor, her voice without control; she stopped frequently in the midst of dire prophecy to fumble for words, alternating between hysteria and the uncertain speech of a woman of humble background. And now entered the spoiler—pushed his way toward the center of the semicircle and began his antics. Sober, he might have been a tractable enough grocery clerk for the A & P. Drunk, he was the irrepressible clown: an Irishman, if the brogue that cropped up in his speech was any indication.

[*Ireland (I muse, sit back today and muse) once fighting a savage, sanguinary war for its freedom —let's call it "freedom" in quotes—for its independence from England, for its sovereignty—leave out all the emotional shibboleths and griefs (for its sovereignty, and not one that would entail the annihilation of England, as the PLO is pledged by covenant to win at the expense of Israel)—leave out all the highly charged wrongs and enmity, Ireland fighting for its right to a distinct entity (the South fighting for its right to secede, with its institutions, from the Union). Place the whole thing in a perspective of economics: Ireland fighting to rid itself of the British investor, the British landowner, businessman, industrialist, banker, in order to keep its wealth and resources from flowing out of the country, and in the hands of its own landowners, investors, bankers, and industrialists. Whatever. How could Joyce so separate himself from the fierce struggle of his countrymen for their independence—and focus his attention on a single day in June 1904, and exclude, while writing about it, all the bloodshed and turmoil between the inception of his work and its completion. What specious claptrap is this* silence, exile, cunning *(borrowed without acknowledgment—was it from some religious order?). What a fraud, what a cover-up! Ah, but friend (I now continue to myself), didn't you do the same thing? Fled, deserted the struggle of your people, more afflicted than the Irish ever were, for a land of their own, their own land. Indifferent, averse, scornful, opposed on principle, adherent of Marxist internationalism, you thought. How can you take Joyce to task? In what way were you different?—Until June '67, when all the diffuse fears of the fate of the Jews, the scarce-credible rumors of a new Holocaust, condensed, sublimated into terrible dread, a terrible woe. Until then, you had been a party-line purveyor, maybe an increasingly uneasy one, but still a party-line servitor. How were you different (cringing henchman of a paranoid), seeking to dissociate yourself from fellow-Jews, but instead were a fervent defender of "the oppressed and dispossessed and inoffensive" Arabs, the anti-nationalist internationalist—as Joyce, the universalist, quit Ireland (and never wrote about anything else). You found a haven for your alienation from your people in Marxist doctrine, as Joyce in universal culture, and both proved sterile. I seem to feel a difference between us, and yet can't put my finger on it: why did I eventually become partisan, not of the Diaspora I shunned, but of Judaism's rebirth in Israel; while he never reunited with a new Ireland? Perhaps it was because I came later in the day, or because I could never create so coruscating a blind alley as he, with his dazzling virtuosity, a mausoleum to lie in. No, my fate was more like Pound's; to live long enough so that the warp of time became manifest, so inexorably contrary to one's views one had to repudiate them—even repudiate the self, though grown old, testify to the truth though grown old. I am only furious at myself for having taken so long, so ponderously long to have effected the change—to the degree that I have, however inept, inadequate. One Israeli lad, ambushed and slain in Lebanon, is one of my kin, a surrogate son, ambushed and killed in Lebanon—and the same holds true for the way my beloved M. feels, distressed and sorrowing at the news. Oh, I know the question that will be asked: What are we doing in Lebanon? What about the claims of the PLO to an independent state? What about Israel? Her security, her existence. Who is going to ride above this battle, look down at the warring sides with Olympian detachment?—only Olympians. That sort of detachment spells paralysis; has spelled it for me these four decades and more; compels me now to intrude upon my own work, disrupt its unity for lack of time—for I know I shall never have time to set forth my views later, in their due place, neither the time nor the strength, perhaps not even the faculties. . . .*]

"WHAT'RE YOU doin' here?" the drunk heckled the Scottish-looking woman as she preached. "Will you tell us: what do

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you think you're doin'? Thish no church." And when she refused to heed him, he alternated ogling her with gapings of mock solemnity, lolling his head. She closed her eyes to blot him out. He grinned in triumph, turned to the crowd, and brayed like a donkey. The crowd guffawed. Encouraged, he went the rounds of the little group, trying out his big grin, and feigning fright at each stony response. He winked broadly at the pretty brunette, and said: "You don't want to be here. No-o-o." He rocked back with besotted earnestness. The little man with the briefcase and Bible gave him a shove. And ugly in an instant, the drunk turned on the other: "Whatsa matter with you?" But before the confrontation could develop further, the Negro woman struck her tambourine, and the group began to sing. Song cemented them, and the drunk wandered back to the inner ring of spectators.

And now the little man, with a swift movement, set his briefcase against the base of the lamppost and strode out to the middle of the circle. He had been a sinner, he declared, but through the holy power of Christ Jesus he had been saved. He spoke with an accent, something middle-European, but an accent I couldn't identify. Once again the drunk stepped out of the audience into the open center. With a Yiddish accent he mimicked the preacher: "You read the Bible, Mister? Oy, he reads the Bible. You gotta Bible, Abie?" He flapped upturned palms. The crowd laughed. Individuals turned completely around in transports of mirth, and stamped their feet.

"Bombs will rain from the air," shouted the little man. "Airplanes will drop bombs from the air, and whole cities will be laid waste, as it is written: the world will be destroyed before the coming of Christ!"

"Whadda ya know?" said the drunk. "Abie knows all about it."

"The hand of God will take care of him," said the Negro woman.

"Is he your boyfriend?" the drunk leered at her.

She turned her head away. He lurched toward the pretty brunette: "Is he your boyfriend?"

"Don't pay him no heed, Sister," the Negro woman admonished.

"Who is it doesn't feel in his heart the coming of the last days?" the preacher shouted. "Daily, daily the end approaches. Armageddon draws nigh, the doom is made ready—Will you be ready for that day? Come now to Christ Jesus. Tomorrow will be too late! I implore, I implore—" he brandished the Bible: "Heed the words of Revelation! Seek Christ Jesus for your soul's sake!"

"He's your boyfriend," the drunk reeled toward the woman with the pinched lips and sharp nose, the woman I thought was Polish. And suddenly she uncoiled, so suddenly only the sound gave proof of the act; she slapped him.

He staggered away toward the curb. The Polish woman followed. And slap! "You win," he grinned, whined comically, ducked. "You win, lady." And slap! And again. "I'll take it from a woman," he took shelter behind fending arms. "I'll take it from a woman."

"I'll show you!" the Polish woman swung again.

"That's enough, Sister Mary!" the Negro woman cried out. "Leave him alone."

But Sister Mary had tasted blood. White headdress flying, she pursued the retreating drunk, who still repeated with each blow: "I'll take it from you because you're a woman."

"Sister Mary!" the other women cried. "Sister Mary, come back!"

"I'll show him!"

"Leave him alone, Sister Mary," the Negro woman followed her sister revivalist. "Leave him alone. He's troubled in spirit."

Reluctantly, Sister Mary desisted.

"I took it because she was a woman," said the drunk.

"This man claims to be a Roman Catholic!" the little man shouted. "And yet he mocks prophecy, the clear prophecy of the Bible foretelling the ruin of the world and the end of days. He claims to be a Roman Catholic, and yet he blasphemes the name of God. What does this show? It shows that salvation lies neither in Catholicism, nor Protestantism, nor Judaism, but in Christ Jesus alone. Now! Seek salvation! Now! Before the coming of the Almighty's wrath!"

A well-spoken refined-looking woman, with hennaed hair and wearing glasses, had come over to the drunk: "You look like a decent man," she addressed him. "Why don't you leave them alone? I don't believe in what they say any more than you do. They're poor, troubled people, but they're perfectly harmless, and should be left alone."

"I took it, didn't I lady?"

"Yes, but now you ought to go on, and leave them to preach their message."

"Yes, you have no right to disturb them," seconded a portly man with a neat mustache. "They're just trying to tell in their way they feel something's wrong. It would do you good to listen."

"Who're you to tell me I've got no right?" the drunk demanded truculently. "I'll take it from a woman. I won't take it from a man."

"I'm not asking you to take anything," argued the man with the neat mustache. "I'm just asking you to grant these people their rights of free speech, and not to disturb them."

"Please, be quiet!" the little man rushed over.

"I got as much right to be here as you got," the drunk edged closer to the man with the neat mustache.

"Certainly. It's a free country."

"Well, who the hell're you to tell me what to do?"

"I'm just trying to be your friend."

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"I don't want you for a friend—there!"

"All right, but don't disturb these people."

"Will you please be quiet!" the little man shouted at the top of his voice. And other voices in the crowd joined in: "Leave them alone, you! Go on, beat it!"

"Try to stop me," the drunk defied with surly self-assurance.

"I won't try to stop you," said the man with the neat mustache. "I'll get a cop."

"Yeah?"

"Yes, I will."

The drunk rocked on his heels for a space. "I'll show you I'm a sport." He drew from his pocket a handful of small change. "I'll show I'm a sport." He sorted out the nickels, and pocketed the rest, and stepped into the center of the circle again. "I wanna make a contribution," he said to the little man, whose voice had become hoarse with preaching. "A good-will offer." The little man avoided him. The drunk swayed after the other. "I wanna make a little contribution—"

"In the name of Jesus, go away!" the little man struck at the proffering hand, sending the coins flying to the sidewalk.

"Where's my nickels?" the drunk wagged his head. "All right, here's a dime."

And now, *deus ex machina* in blue, the cop arrived: a sergeant, a huge man who hulked above everyone else. He stretched out his arms, and seemed to encompass everyone there. "What's goin' on here?" he asked. "What's the meanin' o' this?" He seemed as pained as he was perplexed.

"We are preaching here to save our fellow men before the coming of the end," said the little man, who scarcely reached the sergeant's chest. "We are preaching the warning of Revelation. We are preaching the Gospel," and he added quietly, "the word of God."

"Sure, I've nothing against the word of God," said the sergeant, "but it's an inconvenience to traffic."

"We have a right to stand here," said the Negro woman.

"That you have," said the sergeant. "But you've no right to obstruct the sidewalk."

"It ain't us; it's him," the Polish woman pointed at the drunk. "That one."

"Well, go over to Columbus Circle," the sergeant stretched his arms even wider. "There's more room there."

None of the revivalists would budge.

"Please!" the sergeant beseeched the little man.

He wavered.

"Please!" the sergeant repeated. "I know it's important for your message to reach the people, but this ain't the place to do it on the sidewalk in front of Weber & Heilbroner."

The little man nodded, took a firmer grip of his Bible, and prepared to leave. "Mister, is that your briefcase?" I asked. He regarded me wordlessly, picked up his briefcase.

With the sergeant in the rear, herding them south toward Columbus Circle, they made their departure, the drunk trailing them, grinning happily.

June 1939, Saturday night

To begin at the beginning—more or less—I had a note from M. informing me that her father had said he would take us all out to dinner (instead of our having dinner at her sister B.'s, as she had planned); and would I call for her at 6:00. We would then go to B. and her husband J.'s at 6:15 for a snifter, and the parents would come at 7:00. I quit writing at 4:45. (An outline of a sketch, this time perhaps salable, of an incident connected with my swimming with the Irish toughies of 119th Street off bare-ass beach in the Harlem River. Interesting, the kind of coexistence I'd established with my demon—my obsessive anxiety—provided I didn't strain too hard—or too close to the self.) I bathed—and shaved with a new blade. Then with necktie in my pocket, and not yet daring to risk putting on a clean shirt, but dressed in my faded, blue polo shirt, blue slacks (Macy's basement bargain) and the Wanamaker English jacket of gray plaid—of my old benefactor Edith's bounty—my tan shoes, none too sturdy in appearance any longer, and my gray, weathered felt hat, in want of cleaning and blocking, and with small vent-hole at the crimp, I sallied forth. At the last moment I remembered that M.'s note instructed me to: bring pipe. So I pocketed pipe, and in typical, absent fashion, deciding not to take the Bull Durham cigarette tobacco along, left the pipe in my room instead, and had to return and fetch it. I bought a small tin of more expensive pipe tobacco, Revelation, 18¢, out of the $1.40 I had left until my next Home Relief check a week or more hence. Then I knocked at M.'s window.

She wore a print, completely sleeveless. She had cut the half-sleeves away when they tore at the seams under the armpit. The material was of some cottony stuff printed with a design of little brown and black circles. She smiled at me from the other side of the open steel door; I looked at her questioningly, and indicated her room. She said: "It's safe." We went in, and she clung to me, and told me the day's news: J. and B. had been there, also Mr. and Mrs. P., her parents. They had all had a light lunch there, Swiss cheese and Jewish rye bread, and liked it. She had been copying music before I arrived, and one of the sheets was still wet, and I almost touched it—lying on the table under the gooseneck lamp—but she said just in time: "It's still wet, darling." It looked beautiful, though (her cantata which she was preparing to have blueprinted), the black India ink notes contrasting strongly with the thin white paper. She remarked on the three-pointed pen she used, its tendency to clot: the ink coated

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the pen like a paint. I suggested that the musical notation would make a fetching design for a cloth. She thought she could make a million dollars on the idea. "I have a shirt here," I said, producing my necktie. She got the shirt out of the drawer, and I matched it with the tie. "How do you think it will look?" The shirt was gray (also of Edith's provenance), the tie blue.

"It's better than what you have on," she said.

"Oh, I wasn't going to wear that," I said.

"I know, darling."

I doubted that shirt and tie matched, but she thought they would do, saying my best colors were gray and blue. I said I'd go out for a walk until 6:00, and she said she'd dress meanwhile. She clung to me and shed a tear. I shook her and told her not to be silly. She promised to behave when I came back. And before I left showed me a letter from the head of her department, in which she described the consternation of the girls at W. College on learning that M. would not be teaching there next fall.

I walked west to Lexington Avenue, and loitered before the antique shops, the chinaware and chairs, and ruminated on my writing: whether I had recovered enough equanimity to tackle the sketch—*Broker* (how apt the subliminal self was)—that had sent me into the night on the verge of hysteria or whether to elaborate the Harlem River incident. Mused, trying to find graphic analogies for my state—if I ever had to describe it to someone: short circuit, but not the apocalyptic one of my novel. A kind of hairline crack, say, in the distributor of a car, or perhaps a spark plug, that diverted just enough mental current from its destination to impair performance; something of the sort. It was always there, deflecting the mind, draining it, depriving it of its natural élan. It would never allow again any long, integrated literary work, never could sustain one. And I would have to live with it now and from now on . . . live with it, become inured to it, become resigned. . . .

I RETURNED to M.'s room a few minutes after six. She was dressed in her homemade hopsacking suit out of oaten-colored cloth that I had helped her fit, or hang, crawling around her ankles with foot-rule and pins. And on her head, canted pertly and with a black ribbon trailing in the back, she wore her little brown postage stamp of a tam. I washed my face and neck again to insure as cool an appearance as possible, and slipped into my newly-laundered gray shirt. She buttoned the back of the collar after my tie was properly adjusted and we sat down to compose ourselves before setting out.

We decided not to imbibe any alcoholic beverages at J. and B.'s in order to stay cool, and neither of us felt we needed any.

"Why is B. so nervous about their coming here?" I asked. I knew there had been considerable parental resistance to her marriage to J.; but I thought that was all over with; that he was accepted now, a successful free-lance photographer.

"No," M. said. "There's always been that antagonism between the two: B. gets like that"—M. clenched her fist—"whenever she sees Mother. Mother has a strong tendency to be masterful, and B. has resisted her all the way. There were some awful scenes at home." We stood up, and prepared to leave.

"What about you?" I asked. "Did you get along?"

"Oh, yes, she approved of me. I did all the things she wanted me to, or almost." We walked out into the fine late afternoon. "Got top grades in school. Phi Beta Kappa in my junior year."

"And now you're about to do something more outrageously unconventional than all your—your siblings." We entered the shadow of the covered way under the new construction, and she took my hand.

"This is one block where I'm sure your collar won't wilt," she said.

"That's right. I ought to be grateful for Vermont covered bridges on New York sidewalks. You know something? You don't burp any more."

"Yes, J.'s noticed that too."

"What's its miraculous disappearance due to?"

"I don't know. You're going to say it's you, smarty-pants."

"Of course, the only new thing in the picture is my taking you to bed."

"But that's no longer new, darling," she said silkily.

We laughed. I admired—and envied without covetousness—the easy, unruffled flow of her thought, the tranquillity of her riposte that still served its purpose without heat or satiric barb. Ah, to have been bred that way, been brought up that way. It wouldn't have done me any good to have run away from home at age twelve. As the seedling was bent—or however that maxim phrased it. God, there was so much to think about when I was with her, so much that reflected itself back to myself in the glass of her constancy, revealing about me that which made me shake my head in gloomy distaste again and again.

We went into the elevator, and up two flights, and rang the doorbell. B. looked pretty, tip-tilted nose and blonde hair, and comely in a kind of postcard-pale yellow dress made of something rayony, and topped by a small jacket that for some reason seemed to go with the word bolero. And J. wore a brown suit of gabardine, and a chocolate-brown shirt with a bold plaid McCrossen tie. I was relieved to note that he was not wearing a white shirt (a white shirt was something Mother favored—that, and tobacco pipes). His shirt was open, necktie loose. Their phonograph was playing as we came into the living room, the "Beer Barrel Polka," J.'s favorite for the week. Their living room was large, nicely furnished, semi-

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moderne, plate-glass coffee table on wrought-iron legs and Scandinavian chairs. J.'s photographic equipment was discreetly spaced about, and on the white walls his commercial photographs: a game-hunting arrow with broad-headed tip hanging down, which he had photographed for an insurance company over the caption of their always hitting the mark; a row of test tubes in a rack, a photo done for Consumers Union analyzing the ingredients of a candy bar. He had also taken and enlarged, for his own enjoyment, several pictures of the Lower East Side, teeming as ever with pedestrians halted or in passage beside pushcarts. I studied them nostalgically, and in one I thought I could make out the word *Mohel* in Hebrew lettering on a sign above the doorway of a tenement.

"There are an awful lot of people born in New York. Were you?" J. asked.

"No, I was born in Austria-Hungary, but some years ago, after the war, I was born again in Poland." They laughed.

"What's the name of the town?" J. asked.

"Too many z's in it to pronounce," I said.

B. recalled crossing over the border into Canada with a party of social-service workers. The rest of the people were born in New York. But she had said proudly: "Portland, Oregon."

"That's when Father was a minister in the logging camps," said J.

"But you weren't born there?" he addressed M.

"Oh, no, I'm a true Brahmin," said M. "Somerville, Boston."

"And you?" I asked J.

"In Suburbia, New Jersey."

OUR levity and small talk seemed to accentuate our nervous anticipation, like tics of uneasiness. What did we want to drink? J. asked. We couldn't decide between vermouth and abstaining, and the question languished there. B. told M. she had done an elegant job in making her dress.

"Does the pattern call for a belt?" she asked.

"No, it was optional," said M. "Would you like it without?"

B. thought she would: "Either that, or a little tighter."

"Yes," said M. And with a whole body's affirmation pulled in the cloth belt a grommet or two more snugly about her narrow waist. Again the question of drinks came up, and we still couldn't decide. J. gave up. I thought M. would benefit by having a vermouth cocktail, and she agreed. With J.'s permission I made her one, and served it, but had none myself. To J.'s nervous garrulity on the propriety of having drinks before the main guests arrived, I said that nothing in my tradition dictated either, only that a *shicker* was a *goy*, and translated that for their benefit; but more to the point, if ever I had an obligation to my shirt collar, this was the evening. I drew out my pipe.

"Oh, yes, that's right," said J., and immediately followed suit. His smoking tobacco looked at first like the brand known as Model, and I lamented my extravagance at splurging 18¢ for my can of Revelation, while his cost only a nickel. But it wasn't Model.

"Let's play rummy," said B. The "Beer Barrel Polka" was set spinning again, J. caviling that the music was too low—tinny—but no one moved to remedy the sound, so on it churned: "Roll out the barrel; we'll have a barrel of fun." Then came the business about the window shades. Sunlight of late afternoon sloped into the room, and B. said she was too warm—and pulled the shades down. But J. objected—and raised them again.

"They're better down," M. suggested. "The window panes are simply filthy."

"They still let in some light," said J. "Oh, you lived in a brown house," he chaffed, "with brown insides, and you wore a brown dress."

"M. still shuns light," I joined ungallantly in the banter. (J., the photographer, loved light, and at night wanted all the electric lamps on at once.)

M. pulled the shades down once more, but up they went again, thanks to J. Everyone wandered about, or sat uneasily, as I did, nursing the spruceness of my shirt collar. I had taken my English jacket off when I came into the apartment, as a primary means for keeping cool; but as time approached for the guests to arrive, I fetched it again, and put it on.

"Do you really want to wear your jacket?" asked J.

"No," I said, "but they'll soon be here."

"Don't be silly," B. admonished. "Here give it to me. I'll hang it up." I surrendered the garment.

"The P.'s are human, you know," J. reassured me.

"Well, I'm trying to accept the rules of the game and behave accordingly." And just then the door buzzer strummed.

I REMEMBER a woman, sharp-featured, spare, and quick, she seemed, sharp-eyed, cleaving into the room; attired in a red hat and a blue and white vertically striped shirtwaist, she carried a red handkerchief, and her lips were rouged the same color—carmine. I don't remember the color of her skirt. She greeted her daughters with a kiss, and her voice was light and sweetly cordial, and completely stylized. Followed a man, heavy-shouldered, bulky and big, clad in a gray suit of thin weave. He had a sunburned bald head surrounded by a fringe of gray hair, and a bulbous socratic nose. Compared to him, in almost all respects, features and figure and grace of bearing, his wife epitomized aristocracy. He was deliberate in his movements, as befitted his ponderous physique. I shook hands with the one and with the other. After that, events, though not blurred, became episodic, and I am no longer certain of their proper sequence.

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Father sat down in the easy chair before the window in contention, settled himself comfortably and drew out his heavy briar pipe. Mother began talking rapidly and brightly about their lovely boat trip from Boston to New York, and the perfectly glorious weather we were blessed with. B., who had been in Buffalo recently for a social workers' convention, said that the weather there had been positively cold. Had she looked up so-and-so while she was there? Mother asked. No, she hadn't had a chance to. Some talk of Niagara Falls and their beauty on the Canadian side.

"A big piece fell off the American side," J. remarked.

"Oh, yes," we all agreed, with Mother adding: "Wasn't it too bad. The Cave of the Winds is gone."

"Is that so?" I was genuinely surprised. "A friend and I visited it in 1924, after high-school graduation."

"The king and queen of England were there when we were," said Mother.

"We could have come within ten feet of them, if we had wanted to," said Father. The royal pair, he went on, were staying at the Regency, and had he chosen to go to some sort of Kiwanis International reception there, he and Mother could have been near to British sovereignty itself. Mother had declined to go.

"I'm too much of a democrat to think it's worth the trouble," she said. "A democrat with a small d of course."

J. brought out pictures he had taken of the monarchs at the World's Fair, which showed them in the same limousine as Governor Lehman and Mayor La Guardia. "The bouncy little man," he explained, "is La Guardia."

There followed talk about conventions, with Father chaffing B. about belonging to a social-workers' organization, a kind of a union, heaven help us. He had a hearty laugh with a deep jolly ratchety timbre about it. They spoke of conventions in general—and the way the Legionnaires behaved. Everything had to be chained down or removed, especially in the hotels they occupied, because anything was apt to be heaved out of the window. They were a wild bunch, but taming down a bit, said Father.

"They're growing older," J. offered the opinion.

"Oh, no," Father differed, masculine and forceful. "The hotels demand a bond before they'll accept the Legionnaires as guests. That's what's taming them down." He went on to recount the difficulty he had had in getting a certain suite of rooms for his offices in one of the better-class hotels in the Midwest. The American Legion had held its convention there the week before, and wrecked the place; and the manager adamantly refused to let him have the suite. "But this is a different kind of organization," Father had tried to convince the other. "This is the Kiwanis, not the Legion." The manager had listened politely, and a little knowingly, but still refused as adamantly as before. "I'm going to have that suite," said Father (and once again the timbre of his voice summoned up the essence of administrative, of executive, America). "And since you won't give it to me, I'll have to go over your head." He had called up B., a large stockholder in the hotel, and B. had called the manager, advising him he had made a mistake (at which we all duly laughed). "Well, you never saw a man so humble before," said Father. "By the time we were ready to leave, he went out of his way to tell us how very wrong he had been in his estimation of our organization."

Other conventions were discussed, the entire spectrum of conventions: the Retail Liquor Dealers, who went about plastered drunk for three days—said Mother. The Lumbermen's convention, whose members went about sporting canes and wearing a stick in their lapels. The Canners, Mother thought, were the worst.

"The canners?" I said in surprise. "They sound so innocuous."

"Oh, they're anything but," Mother assured me. "They really behave dreadfully." Then the Shriners were brought up for consideration. I have forgotten now whether it was the Shriners or Legionnaires who sprayed acetate on women's legs, which made them feel as if wading through water. J. recalled how on one rainy day, a group of Shriners bought fishing poles and settled on a curbstone and fished.

"How much did you get paid for that?" Mother stood up while J. was still talking, and was inspecting a photograph he had taken for *Field and Stream*: a camping scene, a tent pitched by a stream with a canoe on its bank.

"Must you know?" J. parried.

"Yes. It's very pretty. Now don't be coy, J. It's all in the family."

"For your benefit, G.," he addressed her by her first name, "I was paid fifty dollars."

"That's a tidy sum." And now her quick eye came to rest on the window. "Why, J., what a window!"

"I just didn't have a chance," said J. "The day the window cleaner was here, I forgot to tell him, and when I was he wasn't."

"B.," Mother advised. "You could easily train ivy to go up the window."

B. didn't seem interested. . . .

[I feel quite depressed as I transcribe from journal to typewriter. What does it come to?—this mounting up, piling up, even in recollection, of allusions to a world of which I shared not the remotest part, cared nothing for, either, though that's beside the point—maybe—could only sit, feigning alterness, and keeping fingers unlocked in my lap because they stuck together. I try to recall, but it is beyond

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recall, whether I sought M.'s eyes or not, M.'s smile of encouragement or sympathy. In later days publicists and sociologists would speak of a generation gap. There was no such term then; it was taken for granted that American parents, in general, those of the middle class (not my own immigrant ones, of course), expressed attitudes no longer in vogue—nothing wrong with them, only at variance, because taken up with traditional concerns, positive concerns, American business, American drive, the overcoming of obstacles, forging ahead of competition: success. There it was again. And perhaps it was that, in this unfamiliar setting, without realizing it then—but only now—that tenuous sorrow, scarcely at sentient level, that I felt in the sacrifice of my own estranged kin, I also felt here. Without knowing it, just feeling it: the no-longer creative sacrifice of personality for no-longer affirmative, no-longer stirring aspirations. Other men and women, better equipped intellectually and by training, have said all this long before, and with a trenchancy far beyond me

Different, though, were the ways of analysis and the ways of feeling. M.'s father, the idealistic clergyman with a mission to Far Western logging camps, a mission of salvation, become the executive secretary; a kind of spiritual gloss mitigating the crassness of conservative American businessmen. If I could only have formulated his role then, as M. did, as M. perceived it, and as I have now barely learned to do, I think I could somehow have buffered the nameless, blind wave of hopelessness and of isolation I felt. On top of everything else that I was, and detested being, I had to enact this that I wasn't. Only that tall girl dressed in her homespun hopsacking suit, who sat across the room, was my nexus here. She was my future: I had no other: she was my need. But what was I on the scale of her need? Home Relief pauper, dubious scrivener, Jewish neurotic.]

July 1939, Friday night

I took M. home Friday evening for the Sabbath supper. She had gotten over her apprehension about going to my parents' home; and on my part, it was a deliberate decision to go there Friday evening, when Pop was sure to be home, and we could, as it were, keep the reconciliation thriving.

It was dusk when we got off the Brooklyn train. We passed the hovels where the Negroes lived. Perhaps it was just such unmitigated squalor, I thought, about which I had tried to make a superficial story that now lay in my bureau drawer, exacting such retribution. It could be made to seem so, though it probably had nothing to do with the case, an afterthought. I slipped M.'s hand through the crook of my arm. Around the corner, in houses adjoining Mom's, lived the Gypsies; we saw flounce of gaudy skirt, drab men sitting on the porches. Mom said, always observing life with such utter absence of self that her very recounting was fraught with the sublimity of primitive generalization, how enviable: the young Gypsy woman who had lost her husband screamed her grief incessantly hour after hour, unconsolably—until the day he was buried. And then, said Mom, it was as though the young widow had wiped the slate clean. You would never have known that yesterday she was howling in bereavement. Wiped away and over.

Mom welcomed us—at the door. Pop as usual lurked in embarrassment in the front room, until he had mustered up the necessary social self-possession to come out and say hello. We had brought back several empty jars—to replenish Mom's supply—jars that had been full of homemade jelly she had given us when we were last there.

The table was covered with a white tablecloth embroidered with white figures, and set with new silverware—and with all the professional skill of Pop's calling as a waiter. As we stood talking, Mom's ancient poodle decrepitly crept in—newly shorn of its scraggly curls—and I quipped that it looked like a clam without its shell. "That's my friend," said Mom staunchly, and laughed. For once she refrained from adding, "That's my best friend," to Pop's annoyance.

There was, as always when my father entertained guests, guests whom he had been expecting, and in expectation accumulated a degree of tension, that nervous abrupt air about everything he said and did. It was at such times, when he was close to being overwrought—and most apt to fly off the handle at a trifle—that Mom seemed to insist on doing things her own way, with an obduracy nothing short of deliberate provocation. It was an ancient, grievous story. First, contrary to his expressed wish, she broke off irregular chunks of the braided *challah*, instead of cutting neat slices, as he urged. With company present, Pop always concealed his anxiety (I suspect anxiety over his volatility, fear of the imminence of his uncontrollable eruption) by adopting a super-mild tone of voice. It purred with humility and inoffensiveness. The poor man evidently thought, if he thought about it at all, that his unctuousness created an image of himself that he would give anything to be: the calm, polite, and self-possessed individual. Instead, his show of cordiality had an air of unreality about it; one sensed another person behind the feebleness of the wheedling, good-humored front. Especially was this true to anyone who knew him, knew how fantastically at variance this deportment was with his customary behavior —which showed itself when Mom insisted on tearing off hunks of *challah* (more picturesque actually than sliced, I think, and more tempting in its homey honesty). His voice shifted momentarily to the harsh, rancorous sound I had known so many years. He glared at her, the meek, benign, countenance becoming leathery with hate and exasperation.

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Again, he urged her not to place all the "appetizer" dishes on the table at once: the small meatballs in jellied gravy, the gefilte fish in its clotted and spiced aspic, the chopped eggs in rendered chicken fat, the cucumber salad. He pleaded that she bring on only one or two at a time. She refused to heed. They were all brought to the table at once. Again that glare: of volcanic fury pent beyond endurance. Tortured spirit, and my mother too, both of them wrecked lives, wrecked in different ways. M., dear girl, sensed it all, and sat there quietly, her tender brown eyes toward me. The pity of it all. My father's lower teeth were almost all gone by now, and his cheeks had the toothless sag of old age.

We talked about the World's Fair. I had been there and Mom, too, but my father and M. had not. We discussed the exhibits, and Pop said he had heard that the Fair authorities contemplated lowering the admission prices.

"What about those who've bought books of tickets?" M. asked.

"That's what they're waiting for—till they use them, so there shouldn't be no squawk. And you, you're going when your father and mother come again?" he asked. M. said she was. "The trouble is," said Pop, "I only have Saturdays off."

"Yes, it's crowded weekends," I sympathized.

"I think I'll go there, and spend the whole day," said Pop.

"You'll have to. But even then I don't know whether your legs will hold out."

"As much as I'll see, I'll see. I know I won't see half of it. But I'll spend the day."

"Good," said Mom, in Yiddish. "Even two days. I won't miss you." Pop's face darkened, but he made no reply. "I'll be rid of you for a day," Mom pressed on. It seemed so gratuitously cruel, so unnecessary (so unnecessary, and yet with what horrible necessity) that I snapped at her in Yiddish:

"Why do you have to say that!"

She laughed, and with blatant mockery: "What did I say?"

"Oh, you're always starting these things," I said. "Why do you irritate him?"

"Ah, you're being a fool!" said Mom.

"You don't have to torment him," I growled—and was glad M. didn't understand.

"You're also a distraught one," Mom retorted. "The way he is, you are. You kindle at a single word."

I thought it better to hold my peace.

"Well, I think I'll spend a day there," Pop resumed. And to M.: "Later in the season, we'll all go there, hanh?"

"That would be nice," she said.

Later, talk turned to our cousin Stella's house party. My mother found fault with the spread; not too bountiful a showing, but she liked the rooms. My father remarked that there were too many guests and it was too hot; so he had left early. I commented on Shirl's loss of weight, that she had acquired a slimmer figure. His face softened and he chuckled: "Yes, she's getting a *shapeleh*. She took off eighteen pounds already. She's going to lose twenty more. She was too heavy."

"What did she weigh?"

"I think a hundred eighty pounds," he said. "She has big bones. Like her father. He had big bones."

"It wasn't all diet, was it? I think she said something about injections."

"No, she gets a needle," said Pop.

"That's what I mean." And to M.: "We're talking about a cousin of mine who was at the house party," I explained.

"Yes," Pop warmed to the subject. "Dr. W. used to give her a needle in the arm; but her arm got so sore, now he gives her a needle in her back—on her *tokhes*," he said to me in Yiddish, and smiled.

Said Mom satirically: "She's become his private secretary and bookkeeper."

"*Azoi?*" I made light of her remark.

"Ask him," she advised.

I didn't. But thought at such times became too condensed for separation, streaked like a livid thread through the mind: of what *he* was, plied with inferences of Mom's adamant spite—and with what *I* was. And there across the table sat the tall, rangy girl with her patrician features and dark blonde hair. Her attachment was so wholly unfaltering; she had no need to dissemble that she knew as well as I the least tremor of dismay would undo me, no need to pretend that she had given herself completely. Outside, Gypsies were singing. They sat on the running boards of parked cars (they always have such fine machines, said Mom) and sang something I thought vaguely familiar, some currently popular song; but sang it with typical throaty Gypsy quaver.

We got up from the table, and went into the front room, where we sat and talked a while. Pop wanted Mom to let the dishes go, but she insisted on doing them. "I must make exercise," she said in English, and M. laughed. We were thirsty, all of us, and Mom proposed we quench our thirst in seltzer water. I offered to fetch a pitcherful—but with no great show of alacrity. No, she would go, said Mom, and I acquiesced. M. looked at me in surprise. "My mother'll get more," I excused myself sheepishly. My father said that seltzer left a bitter aftertaste in his mouth; so did ice cream. I recalled Saratoga Springs, the summer mornings only a year ago when M. and I had driven from Yaddo, the artist's colony, in the Model A to the free sulfurous seltzer burbling in spurts out of the pipes of the public founts.

Then some talk of the stock market. I tried to convey the full import of what another cousin's fireman husband had stressed was the fate of the small speculator. Pop's reply was to admit that

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he had lost money in the stock market the past several years, but now he had learned the game, and was confident his luck would change: things would be different. (Which explained in large part where his money went during all those years, as well as justifying Mom's contention that she was sure he was making money, but she didn't know where it went. Her choler, inflamed by decades of Pop's niggardliness, went so far as to accuse him—to me—of supporting another household somewhere: it couldn't be otherwise than that he was keeping a mistress and bastard somewhere.)

Followed some further talk about my refugee cousins whose exodus from Czechoslovakia Pop was sponsoring: Raphael, the head of the family, had earned his living selling goods on the installment plan. In his letters he hinted that he would appreciate Pop's help in establishing a *mikveh* in New York—a ritual bath, I explained to M.—but Pop had other ideas: he proposed going into partnership with Raphael in the running of a bowling alley. "Bizarre man," said Mom laconically, and to me, "His cousin will soon see he has a screw loose."

Came time to take our leave. At ease at last, Pop saw us to the outer gate. It was night. He shook hands with both of us, and told us to take care of ourselves. I knew he was watching us as we walked to the streetlight on the corner.

BACK at M.'s room at about 10:30 P.M. It was the hour for my departure—according to house rules. I lingered. And presently, as I embraced her, we heard the landlord leave. He and his wife kept to a set schedule—for reasons of their own. He left at 10:30 P.M., and she returned for a final inspection and to spend the night at 12:30 to 1:00.

"He's gone," I said.

"I'm tired," said M.

"Are you? Then I'd better go." But she didn't want me to. She wished I could stay with her. "Where?"

"On my couch."

Someone else had stayed there one night, a woman friend. Irresolute, I tarried a little longer—and then decided to stay on. She said she was afraid of loving me so much.

Afterward, the landlady returned prematurely, and there was no way for me to slip out. Fortunately, I hadn't taken the shower I had contemplated, for if I had, I might very well have run into her.

"It seems so silly to have to do this," said M.

And I: "It's better to do it, and be silly, than not to do it."

And I thought as I looked at her in the dark, the swirling brown crepuscule of the city in which light from somewhere was held in suspension like a sediment, that her features wavered so that, though she slept, she seemed to be smiling. Brown swirling night that made her tall, small-breasted figure like something carved out of speckled limestone. I thought of my parents, of their abysmal unhappiness—that yet did not deter me from seeking love. Or was it because of their disastrous lives that I did seek love? I cannot seem to recapture—now as I write—the beauty of the moment of our intimacy, the ancient enchantment of it that imbued everything and made it rare: from the moment when she said I'd catch cold without pajamas, and she ought to have a pair on hand to offer me—to the final kiss. I felt as if I had indeed found peace within myself. And hearing the passing of automobiles, crackle of voices, and footsteps on the pavement outside her open window, I thought as I lay beside her of Ulysses' exclamation in *The Divine Comedy* of having reached the West through a hundred thousand perils.

It was a defiance of fate, really, to come away from such grievous unhappiness at home there in Brooklyn, and to reflect that it was within the realm of the possible for ourselves to end that way, and without a shadow of a doubt to end old and doddering merely on account of living long enough—and yet to venture. But it was incomparably worse not to venture. Fortunately for me, I only *seemed* to have a choice; in actuality—I had none.

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A Primer for Polemicists

Owen Harries

IRVING KRISTOL has written that in an ideological age such as ours, the key political question is: who owns the future? Owns, that is, in the sense of determining the spirit of the age, the prevailing notions concerning what is possible, inevitable, desirable, permissible, and unspeakable. An ideological age is also a polemical age. Hence, if one rules out the notion of a free-floating or impersonally determined *Zeitgeist*, the answer to Kristol's question will to a significant degree turn on the polemical presentations of the main competing ideological cases.

This being so, it is surprising how lightly and casually ideological polemics are taken in the West. Examples abound: the contemptuous dismissal of the UN and its agencies as "talk shops"; the retreat from simple, resonant language to meaningless acronyms and technical jargon in making the case for the Western alliance; the belief that, even in the face of constant attack, it is more important to avoid being "provocative" and "abrasive" than it is to argue forcefully for free societies; the characterization of ideology itself as "mere rhetoric" or "window-dressing," and the refusal to recognize it as a potent motivator of political action.

After nearly forty years of cold war (also known as "peaceful coexistence," "competitive coexistence," and "détente"), after more than two decades of assault by the Third World on Western values and institutions, and constant attacks from within the West itself by alienated groups, there is, so far as I know, no body of work that concerns itself with the techniques and tactics of political polemics. This, in an age when virtually every other area of human activity has received saturation coverage—from how to succeed in the boardroom to how to succeed in bed to how to live in perfect health until the day you die—seems a strange omission.

There are, of course, some in the West who are outstandingly good at political polemics. But for the most part they are good by instinct rather than because they have a clear, conscious idea of what they are about. Even those who write and speak like angels and are marvelously knowledgeable about the issues seem to give scant systematic thought to what precisely they hope to achieve and how best to achieve it. For the beginner there seems to be no alternative to learning on the job, laboriously repeating the mistakes of others and (if he is lucky) eventually reinventing the wheel.

In the circumstances, it seems worthwhile to try to formulate a few modest precepts or rules, both to help the novice and to stimulate experienced practitioners to give the matter some thought. Here, for what they are worth, are my suggestions. The illustrations I give naturally reflect my own, neoconservative position. But the rules themselves are general in character, and those individuals misguided enough to adhere to a different position can substitute their own examples.

Rule 1: Forget about trying to convert your adversary. In any serious ideological confrontation the chances of success on this score are so remote as to exclude it as a rational objective. On the very rare occasions when it does happen, it will be because the person converted has already and independently come to harbor serious doubts and is teetering on the edge of ideological defection. This is due, more often than not, to some outrageous action by his own side or some shocking revelation: witness the effects on members of Communist parties in the West of the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 and the Khrushchev speech of 1956. Then, but only then, a particular argument or example may provide the catalyst to complete the process. When that happens it should be treated as the equivalent of winning a lottery—bearing in mind Lord Bryce's remark (actually made when discussing American presidential elections) that success in a lottery is no excuse for lotteries.

This rule is important for two reasons: because beginners are likely to confuse polemical exchanges with genuine intellectual debate, in which persuading *is* a proper and sensible goal; and because, in the oddly symbiotic relationship that often develops in a prolonged polemic, even the experienced are susceptible of becoming fascinated by their adversaries.

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Rule 2: Pay great attention to the agenda of the debate. He who defines the issues, and determines their priority, is already well on the way to winning. Example A: In a debate over the cold war, so define the issues that the ideals of the Communist system are not contrasted with the reality and practice of democratic countries; otherwise the whole debate will be rigged in favor of the former. Example B: In the current debate on UNESCO, it is essential to insist that what is at issue *is* the actual current performance of the organization, not the worthiness of its ostensible aims as originally set out in its constitution, or the seriousness of the plight of the world's poor.

This rule often requires a debate before the debate—with sponsors and organizers as well as with one's adversary. Diplomats, at least when they are performing effectively, understand this well, which is one reason they often appear fussy and pedantic to outsiders who have not grasped the point at issue (another reason is that they sometimes *are* fussy and pedantic).

It is just as important, and on the same grounds, to deny your opponent the right to impose his language and concepts on the debate, and to make sure that you always use terms that reflect your own values, traditions, and interests. Carelessness, complacency, or misplaced tolerance in response to semantic aggression—as by accepting "socialist" as a description of the totalitarian states of Eastern Europe, "détente" as a description of almost uninhibited hostility, "neocolonialism" as a description of market relations between Western and Third World countries—can be, and has been, enormously costly in surrendering control over the terms of debate.

Rule 3: Preaching to the converted, far from being a superfluous activity, is vital. Preachers do it every Sunday. The strengthening of the commitment, intellectual performance, and morale of those already on your side is an essential task, both in order to bind them more securely to the cause and to make them more effective exponents of it. As religious movements in earlier times and the anti-Vietnam-war and civil-rights movements in our times have shown, dedication and enthusiasm are enormous assets, more than compensating (in the initial stages) for lack of numbers.

On the negative side, one of the most embarrassing experiences in a polemical exchange is to have one's case misrepresented and mangled by one's own supporters. Correction involves delicate problems of alliance management and gives one's opponent rich opportunities to exploit apparent differences of opinion: witness the innumerable free polemical gifts which have been presented over the years to Communists and anti-anti-Communists by crude and uninformed anti-Communists.

Rule 4: Never forget the uncommitted: almost invariably, they constitute the vast majority. This may seem obvious, but intense polemical activity is often a coterie activity, and in the excitement of combat and lust for the polemical kill the uncommitted are often overlooked. The encounter becomes an end in itself rather than a means of influencing wider opinion. Yet what works best in throwing the enemy off balance—cleverness, originality, pugnacity—is often counterproductive with those who are neutral or undecided, who are more likely to be impressed and convinced by good sense, decency, and fairness. It was said of the brilliant English politician, F.E. Smith, in explanation of his failure to get to the very top rather than of his success in getting as far as he did, that "he could as soon hold a hot coal in his mouth as hold back a witticism"—a serious deficiency in a polemicist.

One should not, of course, positively strive to be dull and boring, but a modified form of Dr. Johnson's advice on self-editing applies: whenever you think of something that strikes you as particularly brilliant, at least consider seriously the advisability of suppressing it in favor of something which projects moral and intellectual seriousness in a straightforward way.

Rule 5: Be aware that, at least potentially, you are addressing multiple audiences. Decide whether, on a particular occasion, you want to make a broad appeal to many audiences, which will usually involve compromise and restraint in presentation, or whether you want to make a sharply focused pitch to a particular audience, even at the risk of alienating others. Either decision—or one to strike some sort of balance between the two—may be right, depending on circumstances; the important thing is to be aware of the problem and to take it into account.

This is something which most politicians understand readily. Their conclusion usually is that it is better to sacrifice impact on a limited group for breadth of appeal, which is one reason their utterances so often appear anodyne and bland to those who subject them only to intellectual tests. On the other hand, intellectuals—who tend to move in restricted circles, to regard all who are not intellectuals as unimportant, and to equate compromise with sin—are particularly bad in this respect, usually only taking seriously an audience composed of their peers. Which is why their victories are so often Pyrrhic in character. One of the tests of great political oratory is the ability to transcend this dilemma by successfully combining breadth of appeal with a sharp impact on specially targeted groups.

Rule 6: Be prepared to go around the block many times. When you have a good point to make, keep repeating it. Success in ideological polemics is very much a matter of staying power and will, and the same battles have to be fought over and over again. There will always be someone who is hear-

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ing or reading you for the first time, and even most others will really register something only when they have been exposed to it several times.

Communists understand this rule very well, and may even carry it to excess. Western politicians vary in respect of it—Martin Luther King, Jr. was superb and Ronald Reagan is extremely good—but having to contend with the pressure of the mass media, which consume material at a furious rate and constantly demand something new, makes things difficult for them. Intellectuals, who put a high professional premium on novelty and originality, and have a great fear of being thought boring by their peers, hardly understand the point at all. William Phillips's well-known put-down of Kenneth Tynan—"Your questions are so old I've forgotten the answers"—typifies much in their makeup. They should pin on their study walls a passage from Saul Bellow's novel, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*:

> . . . it is sometimes necessary to repeat what all know. All mapmakers should place the Mississippi in the same location and avoid originality. It may be boring, but one has to know where it is. We cannot have the Mississippi flowing toward the Rockies, just for a change.

They might also put up, alongside this, Wellington's remark at Waterloo: "Hard pounding this, gentlemen; let's see who will pound longest."

An important corollary to this rule, and one which also links it with the following rule, is: do not overcomplicate your presentation. Concentrate on getting a few basic, central points over effectively.

Rule 7: Shave with Occam's razor. Knowing what you can afford to give away is one of the great arts of polemic. It is truly astonishing how often an experienced, reputable polemicist will expend time and energy defending what is irrelevant or peripheral to his case. Thus, in a debate over the American decision to withdraw from UNESCO, it is not necessary to contest the fact that the organization does *some* good work, any more than it was once necessary to contest that Hitler built good roads or that Mussolini made the trains run on time. In some instances, unfortunately, polemicists just get carried away and feel that they have to deny everything that is asserted by their opponents; sometimes it is the other way around, and they feel obliged to defend a whole syndrome of beliefs associated with their own "side," regardless of the irrelevance of many of those beliefs to the matter at issue; and sometimes it is hard to escape the conclusion that they really do not properly understand their own case or the enterprise they are engaged in.

Polemical economy serves several purposes. It narrows the area you have to defend and gives you more time or space to concentrate on what is really essential to your case. The willingness to concede or ignore what is inessential will make it harder for others to characterize you as dogmatic, and is likely to make a favorable impression on the uncommitted. And it may well have a disconcerting "judo" effect on your opponent when he finds that you are prepared to concede what he had assumed you would feel obliged to defend.

Rule 8: Be very careful in your use of examples and historical analogies. More often than not, their illustrative value is outweighed by their distracting effect. People will tend to concentrate on the factual content of the particular episode referred to, the validity of your account of it, or the legitimacy of analogies in general, and to ignore the original point you were trying to make and illustrate. Before you know it, you are off on quite another track. Thus, any references to the appeasement policies of the 1930's in the context of a discussion, say, of American policy in Vietnam or of Soviet foreign policy is likely to bring progress to an end and precipitate a prolonged wrangle over the precise circumstances of the occupation of the Rhineland or the writings of Winston Churchill.

I am not suggesting that no use should be made of examples and analogies. On the contrary, they are often a powerful and persuasive way of bringing a point home, particularly when the analogy links the subject at issue to the personal experience of the audience. (Historical analogies are not the only, or necessarily the best, ones.) In some circumstances you may even wish to precipitate the kind of sideshow I have described. But you should generally be economical in the use of analogies, choose carefully, and be well armed to develop and defend the ones you do choose.

Rule 9: When bolstering the authority of what you are saying by the use of quotation, give preference whenever possible to sources which are not identified with your case. If you can, quote someone who is considered unimpeachable, if not omniscient, by your opponents. This will not convince them, but it will embarrass them and impress the uncommitted. Thus, if you are concerned to establish that "peace" is not, and cannot be, a policy, and that appeals to a common interest in "peace" ignore the different content given to the word by different actors, don't quote Churchill, quote Lenin (writing in the midst of World War I):

> Absolutely everybody is in favor of peace in general, including Kitchener, Joffre, Hindenburg, and Nicholas the Bloody, for every one of them wishes to end the war.

On reflection, quote Lenin *and* Churchill.

Rule 10: Avoid trading in motives as an alternative to rebutting the opposing case. Or, in Sidney Hook's words, "Before impugning an opponent's motives, even when they may legitimately

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be impugned, answer his arguments." This is good advice for several reasons. First, it is the proper thing to do and you will feel better for doing it. Second, motives are irrelevant to the soundness of an argument. Anything that is said by someone whose motives are suspect or bad could equally well (and in all probability will) be uttered by someone whose motives are impeccable, and an answer will still be required. Motives can *explain* error, distortion, and falsehood, but they cannot *establish* the existence of these things. Third, motives are in any case notoriously difficult to establish in a convincing way.

All this is not to suggest that discussion of motives has no place in polemics. But its place is not at the beginning but at the end, when the facts have been established and error exposed. Moreover, there is much to be said for gently encouraging an audience to reach its own conclusions about motives (by asking it to consider what motives are most consistent with and best explain a given pattern of behavior) rather than being unduly assertive and insistent.

Rule 11: Emulate the iceberg. In any polemical exchange, make sure that you know several times more about a topic than you can conceivably use or show. This is important, for one thing, because you will not know in advance what precisely you will have to use on any given occasion: that will depend in part on the performance of your adversary. It is obviously an advantage to be able to respond immediately and effectively to a new argument and to avoid being caught off balance. In addition, and even more important, the unused depth of your own position, the fact that you have much in reserve, will give a resonance and authority to what you do use. While it is difficult to say how precisely this works (probably through the accumulation of small touches), it is fairly easy to tell whether someone is thinly stretched or is working well within himself.

While you should not overload your presentation with data—the average absorptive capacity is very limited—data used discriminately can be highly effective in establishing credibility, projecting authority, and forcing an opponent on the defensive. An example comes to mind. In a teach-in I attended in Australia during the Vietnam war, great play was made of the fact that, according to evidence presented by the American government itself, there were fewer than 40,000 North Vietnamese in the South. Someone finally had the wit to point out that while this number might not be enormous (a) most if not all of those involved were party cadres, and (b) at the beginning of 1917 the membership of the Bolshevik party in Russia was under 25,000. Subsequently, no more was heard along these lines.

Rule 12: Know your enemy. Always bear in mind John Stuart Mill's observation that he who knows only his own position knows little of that. Take particular care to understand the position of your adversary—and to understand it not in a caricatured or superficial form but at its strongest, for until you have rebutted it at its strongest you have not rebutted it at all. This is a necessary condition both for developing your own position fully and attacking his successfully. It is no accident that many of the most effective anti-Communists have been people who at one stage of their lives have been either in or very close to a Communist party—which is the hard way of gaining an understanding of your adversary.

Knowing your enemy will enable you to anticipate likely lines of attack and to consider how they may be best dealt with. It will also enable you to criticize the opposing position from within as well as from without—in its own terms as well as in yours. The use of the classic Jesuit tactic of accepting your opponent's premises and turning them against him is both highly effective and particularly enjoyable.

THAT makes a round dozen rules or precepts. Collectively they will certainly help to lift the level of a polemical performance. But a thirteenth might be added in conclusion, and "for luck." Before employing these or any other debating stratagems, make sure that the position you decide to defend is intellectually, morally, and politically worthy of your efforts. Being on the side of the good and the true does not guarantee success, but, other things being equal, it certainly helps.

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From Eton to Havana

Richard Grenier

HAS Great Britain sent us a film of social and political significance? So it would seem from the reaction of a large portion of the American press to *Another Country*. The first clarion call came from the palms and the temples of the Cannes Film Festival, where New York *Times* correspondent E. J. Dionne, Jr. wrote that *Another Country* was an indictment of the "cruelty and hypocrisy of the old British class system." He also thought it brought "a fresh eye" to the problems of adolescence. When the film opened in New York, *Newsweek* found it "seductive, graceful, and clever," made with "intelligence and craft." Rex Reed, writing for the New York *Post*, said the film had "fire and inspiration." A reviewer for the *Wall Street Journal*, no less, felt it offered "powerful, poignant insights into the hypocrisy and foolishness of the British schoolboys who would become the country's leaders." On a more popular level, *Harper's Bazaar* compared *Another Country* with *Brideshead Revisited* and *Chariots of Fire* as a "romantic exercise in nostalgia." According to *Us* magazine, it was a "luscious look at Oxford preppies in the 30's that turns into serious, fascinating drama. Don't miss."

The innocent reader of all these encomiums might be surprised to learn that in terms of allotted screen time, *Another Country* is first and foremost a rhapsody to the beauties of homosexuality. It is, furthermore, narcissistic, elaborately self-pitying, and smug. The reader might likewise be surprised to learn that the movie was (in the words of the press handouts) "inspired by" the story of Guy Burgess, the upper-class Englishman and Old Etonian who, along with Donald Maclean, Kim Philby, and Anthony Blunt, betrayed his country and ours to the Soviet Union. Scholars of the Korean war feel that thousands of young American soldiers may have died along the Yalu because of the treachery of Burgess and his stylish friends. But all is apparently forgiven now, at least by most of America's film critics. Besides, the film's hero, Guy Bennett (Burgess), wears some absolutely delectable English upper-class apparel.

Aside from enjoying the film's "lusciousness" and "nostalgia," its "seductiveness" and "grace," critics were in almost universal accord that the film is an attempt to explain *why* Guy Burgess betrayed his country. Its answer is that he was a mistreated homosexual. His film surrogate, Bennett, because of his blatant and indiscreet sexual conduct, is denied selection at Eton as one of the school "gods" (a kind of superprefect). If you deny a young man one of Eton's top honors for such a hypocritical reason, the film seems to be saying, how can you expect him not to become a Soviet agent?

To be fair, several critics found the film's explanation of Guy Bennett's treason "reductive" or "inadequate." On the other hand, none seemed exactly horrified by the act of treason itself. This is rather curious in view of the fact that the editorial pages of some of the periodicals in which the reviews appeared quite regularly work themselves into fits of trembling at the possibility that a single American life will be lost in the effort to prevent Central America, or perhaps even Mexico, from being incorporated into the Soviet empire. But maybe the loss of thousands of American lives in Korea through an act of shameless treason seems anodyne to the same papers' film critics (if, indeed, they've even heard about it).

ORIGINALLY a play which ran for two years in London, *Another Country* was adapted for the screen by the play's author, Julian Mitchell, and directed by Marek Kanievska (an Englishman with the strangest male Polish name I have ever encountered). The film begins with a five-minute scene in Moscow. A young American woman reporter is passed through a security check at the entrance to a residential compound, then mounts to a distinctly fusty apartment where a stiff old man is wheeled into her presence in a wheelchair. It is Guy Bennett (Rupert Everett). He had wanted fame, he says. He had wanted his name to live in history. "Even as a Russian spy?" she asks. "You have no idea what life in England in the 1930's was like," answers Bennett. "The whole despicable English background."

To show the despicableness of the background we cut straight to Brasenose College, Oxford: golden gothic stones, acres of well-manicured greensward, a small river, a beautiful stone bridge. (The film is shot throughout in a style worthy of still reproductions in *Town and Country* or *Vogue*.) For the purposes of the movie, Brasenose College has become a school something on the order of Eton, and in the opening frames of the main story we see the whole student body assembled in semi-military formation in the grand court. But even as the young gentlemen are singing a hymn, two of the students—playing hooky perhaps—are caught by

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a master engaging in furious homosexual activity in the gymnasium changing room. Soon Martineau, one of the perpetrators, has hanged himself, and there is the devil to pay. The "gods" assemble (all, as a mark of rank, are allowed to wear their flowered waistcoats with their dark cutaway morning coats); there is a drive on to "clean up" the school's various houses.

But Guy Bennett, now young and sulkily romantic, presses ahead with his ardent sexual vocation as if there were no tomorrow. Without a glimmer of reticence or discretion he propositions his best friend and roommate; when turned down he jibes glibly, "Everyone gives in in the end! It's Bennett's Law!" He ogles a "beautiful" younger boy in another house through binoculars, and proclaims his love for all to hear: "And I shall lay my heart at his feet!" He misses no chance to denigrate heterosexuality, the school, the military, the empire, and, in fact, patriotism.

Bennett is not consistent, however. He confesses to his mother when she visits one weekend that he aspires to be one of the school's "gods." "What's *that*, darling?" Bennett (impatiently): "The school elite, mother! The *crème de la crème*! It's the only thing that makes it all bearable, the thought that one day I'll be on top of the whole stinking heap." His life's ambition is to be British ambassador to Paris, and he is afraid that if he fails to become a "god," the ruling circles will say of him in years to come, "He isn't quite one of us, you know. You see, he wasn't a god, just an ordinary prefect." Almost whimpering, Bennett imagines the dreadful fate of being sent as ambassador not to Paris but to Haiti.

WHAT with Bennett's announced hatred for "the whole despicable English background," one might think the film would show us something of the contrast between rich and poor in England during this period, or express revulsion at some of the more extreme perquisites of the pampered rich. (Bennett: "Champagne. I've been drinking champagne all day and it doesn't pay to mix drinks, my goodness.") Not a bit of it. The only despicableness we are shown is the denial of Bennett's ambition to be a "god" because he is a flamboyant and obstreperous homosexual. Nor is the slightest suspicion raised about the *bona fides* of a person avid to hold high position in a system he feigns to despise. To become a "god" is Bennett's overriding goal, the engine without which *Another Country*'s plot would not advance at all.

As it is, it advances only creakingly. Will A or B become a "god"? Will C or D become a prefect? There are lots of ins and outs. The film has four key characters. The first is Bennett, our romantic, hedonistic, but—until his great disappointment—apolitical homosexual. The second is Judd (Colin Firth): somewhat implausibly, Bennett's heterosexual best friend, an earnest and "idealistic" Stalinist who cannot seem to open his mouth without spewing forth Communist agitprop ("Stalin's working day and night to drag his country into the 20th century; I can't abide it when they sneer at him"). The third is Fowler (Tristan Oliver), Bennett's antagonist: stolid, manly, patriotic, concerned with the honor of the house and school, hostile to Bennett because of both his extravagant homosexuality and his all-around fecklessness. (Bennett turns out for military parade so negligently uniformed as to disqualify his whole house.) Straight as a die, Fowler is of course given no clever lines. The fourth is Menzies (Frederick Alexander), a "god" and shrewd manipulator.

At the end, Fowler catches Bennett pursuing a mad homosexual fling with a younger boy and nails him. Bennett is caned and humiliated before an assembly of the school "gods." Through some fancy footwork, Menzies manages to put Bennett out of the running for the "gods" the following year. And, in the last scene at the school, Bennett, crushed, walking broodingly with his Stalinist friend Judd, says (as if it were a logical development from the events we have been shown), "Wouldn't it be wonderful if Communism were true?" "But it *is* true," answers Judd. Straight cut to Moscow for a one-minute closing scene, with Bennett an old man in a wheelchair again. The woman reporter asks, "But don't you miss anything at all?" Bennett, after some reflection, admits, "I miss cricket."

The film ends with one of those printed "crawls" in which we learn what happened to the various main characters. Judd (idealistic) died fighting in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. Menzies (cynical) became Chancellor of the Exchequer before entering the House of Lords. Fowler (the author's wish-fulfillment) resigned from the army in 1959 with the rank of major and is now retired obscurely after an unsuccessful career in business. And Bennett, we know (although we have not been shown), became a Soviet agent, betrayed his country, and finally defected to Moscow—all because they frowned on his brazen homosexuality and did not make him a "god."

What the "crawl" does not tell us is what our principals would have done during the great war into which their country was about to be plunged. Leave aside Judd, already dead in Spain. Bennett, we must infer, would have been a Soviet mole somewhere in British intelligence. Perhaps he would have passed along to Moscow British codes and ciphers as well as U.S. nuclear secrets to which the British were privy—both things done in real life by Donald Maclean. Menzies and Fowler, with their military training, would presumably have served under the colors, and Fowler in particular might well have been decorated for valor at El Alamein. But *Another Country* is not concerned with praising brave men who saved their country in its hour of peril; it seems to prefer traitors, at least if they underwent an ordeal that deeply stirs our sympathies, such as not becoming a "god" at an imaginary Eton.

THE critics almost unanimously felt that this film is not "judgmental," that it seeks only to "explore" and "investigate" why such privileged

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young men as Burgess, Maclean, and Kim Philby betrayed their country. I can only say: balderdash. The laws of the cinema are virtually immutable. The fact is that Bennett is good-looking. He is witty, clever, and engaging. The action is shown entirely from his vantage point. Guy Bennett is the film's hero, for the same reason and in the same way that the Corleone family and mob are the heroes of *The Godfather*: the story is told from their point of view.

It would obviously be absurd to suggest that audiences of *Another Country* are being urged to go out and commit treason. But for the intended public of this film, it is also plain that treason is not what it used to be. When Burgess and Maclean defected to the Soviet Union in the early 50's, there was a violent surge of outrage in Great Britain. For today's intellectual, artistic, and academic elites and their hangers-on, however, it would appear that treason—at least on behalf of the Soviet Union—is now some sort of forgivable misdemeanor.

Other intriguing questions are raised by Bennett's act. Although inordinately sorry for himself, he is after all sane. Are we to believe, does *he* believe, that the Soviet Union, which even at the time he was giving it his allegiance was murdering and starving tens of millions of its own people in the Great Terror, purges, and the forced collectivization of agriculture, was less tyrannical and hypocritical than his fictionalized Eton? Does one thwack of a cane on an upper-class English hide outweigh, let's say, a million dead in Vorkuta, Dalstroi, or the Kolyma gold fields? Another question: since offended homosexuality is at the heart of this story, are we to believe that homosexuals are treated more benignly under Communist regimes than in the West?

ONE of the difficulties in exposing the evils of Communist repression is that there still is relatively little evidence to offer of the seeing-is-believing sort. It is therefore extremely interesting that France's *Antenne 2*, a television network entirely under the control of France's Socialist government, should have recently co-produced *Improper Conduct*, a two-hour documentary on Cuba's savage repression of its deviants, a repression that has fallen with particular ferocity on homosexuals. *Improper Conduct* is directed by Nestor Almendros, a Cuban exile widely considered to be the world's greatest cinematographer (seven films for François Truffaut, six for Eric Rohmer, and in this country *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *Sophie's Choice*, and the spectacular *Days of Heaven* for which he won an Academy Award). Its co-director is another Cuban exile, Orlando Jiminez Leal, whose *El Super* won several international awards. When aired, *Improper Conduct* reached the largest audience of any documentary in French television history.

The term "improper conduct" is in some ways the Cuban equivalent of Russia's "anti-Soviet behavior," the supremely vague charge under whose guise totalitarian states imprison anyone they have a mind to —when, indeed, they post any charge at all. In this year, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Castro's advent to power, thousands of Cubans are still in prison or labor camps for "improper conduct."

Improper Conduct begins with a startling event. In the fall of 1966, when the prestige of the Castro regime was still high among Western European intellectuals, prima ballerina Alicia Alonso and the Cuban National Ballet Company danced *Giselle* in Paris. After two performances, ten of the company's dancers asked for political asylum in France. The event created a sensation, at least in Europe. Was it possible that Castro's Cuba wasn't the paradise Jean-Paul Sartre had been saying it was?

AT THIS point, the film offers a brief résumé of the Cuban revolution: a surge of euphoria after Batista's downfall, quickly followed by disturbing signs. Under the growing influence of the old Cuban Communist party, Castro, that "Jeffersonian Democrat," opted for an alliance with the Soviet Union and began a total collectivization of agriculture and all means of production. Furthermore, the revolution almost immediately adopted an extremely harsh, puritanical stance on morals and sex. With the militarization of the regime, things became even worse; as early as 1960 came the first round-up of "anti-social elements." Homosexuality was lumped with prostitution, drugs, and corruption as a product of "decadent capitalist society," and was dealt with far more severely than under Batista.

Around 1965, the situation hardened still further. A number of forced-labor camps were set up in the Camagüey district; anyone suspected of dissidence, members of certain religious sects (Jehovah's Witnesses), and thousands of homosexuals were arrested on mere denunciation and deported to the camps. By 1969, people were being rounded up on the streets and in public places for wearing their hair too long, for dressing in "foreign" clothes, for looking too effeminate. The age of criminal liability was lowered to sixteen. Dissident intellectuals were completely expunged from public life. Writers were sentenced to eight years in prison for simply sending literary manuscripts abroad. People were arrested in the streets and imprisoned for "extravagant" behavior in public. It is one of the ironies of our age that U.S. hippies, who adopted their style of dress largely in protest against American "bourgeois" values, would have been arrested on sight in Cuba and sent to a labor camp enclosed in electrified barbed wire. It all sounds rather more harsh than being deprived of the rank of "god" at Eton.

THE heart of *Improper Conduct* is a series of 28 interviews with Cuban exiles, all of whom were victims of oppression in their homeland. They include the poet Heberto Padilla, whose imprisonment unleashed a worldwide wave of protest; the writer Armando Valladares, jailed for twenty-two years and freed thanks to the intercession of French President François Mitterrand; Guillermo Cabrera Infante, the novelist and former editor of Cuba's literary magazine *Lunes*;

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Carlos Franqui, former editor of the official party newspaper *Revolucion*. Aside from these world-famous writers, we have painters, dancers, doctors, workmen, students, and even Caracol, a popular transvestite nightclub performer. Collectively, the picture they give of repression in Cuba is overwhelming.

Not overwhelmed, however, was B. Ruby Rich, Film Program Director for the New York Council for the Arts and the author of a three-page article calling *Improper Conduct* a "litany of evil" and giving Fidel Castro a clean bill of health—this, in *American Film*, the organ of the tax-supported American Film Institute. Miss Rich's article contains four lines of what could properly be called film criticism: the rest is straight political apologetics. Another critic who has attacked *Improper Conduct* along the same lines as Miss Rich is J. Hoberman of the *Village Voice*; Mr. Hoberman is also a contributing editor of the same *American Film*. And to turn to another sector of our cultural establishment, it will be very interesting to see whether the tax-supported Public Broadcasting Service, whose New York affiliate has to date aired four pro-Sandinista documentaries, will run *Improper Conduct* after the movie finishes its theatrical release. Or will this film, produced under a Socialist administration in France, which attracted the largest audience of any documentary in French television history and won first prize at the Strasbourg Human Rights Film Festival, prove too "right-wing" for America's cultural bureaucracy?

NESTOR ALMENDROS, who survived several years under Fidel Castro, says that when he encounters people who do not prize the freedoms they possess in Western democracies, or who admire such countries as Cuba —which is all too frequent—he would like to sentence them to serve two years, not in a gulag but as ordinary citizens in the Marxist-Leninist country of their choice. Such a sentence would be richly deserved by many, and even the authors of *Another Country* would surely find the experience bracing.

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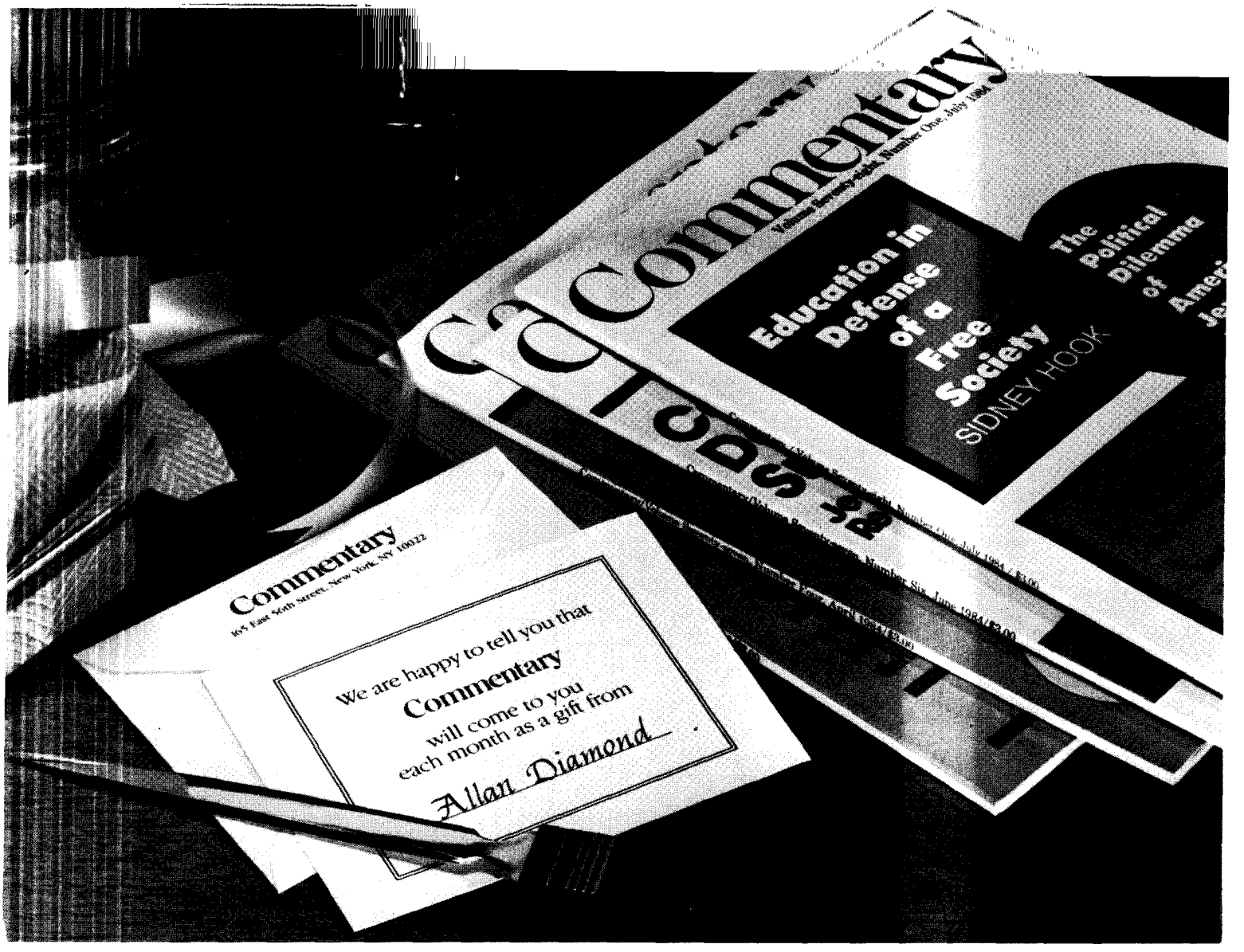

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Commentary

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Up from Underdevelopment

REALITY AND RHETORIC: STUDIES IN THE ECONOMICS OF DEVELOPMENT. By P.T. BAUER. *Harvard University Press. 184 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL NOVAK

THROUGHOUT the 1930's the intellectual sky was gray with books predicting the doom of capitalism; then, after World War II, came the wholly unexpected "economic miracles" of Western Europe and Japan. What were deflated socialists to do? Some years ago the British economist P.T. Bauer (now Lord Bauer) described what many did do: they abandoned the West to its "stinking capitalism" and became prophets of socialism on behalf of the nations still sunk in poverty.

There was always an absurdity in this. Marx, after all, had seen no point in socializing poverty; it was capitalism, not socialism, that would produce development and prove a way out of economic misery. Nevertheless, during the years 1950-80, while the economic reality of significant parts of the Third World was being shaped by the great practical (and capitalist) work of the communications and transport industries, the trading companies, and the distributors of new technologies, the rhetoric of the Third World was being shaped by academic socialists fleeing from the successes of the West. Bauer's new book, a collection of essays, is about this gap between reality and rhetoric.

The conventional wisdom, which dominated the field of international economics forty years ago and is today only slightly amended, Bauer states as follows:

> General backwardness, economic unresponsiveness, and lack of enterprise are well-nigh universal within the less developed world. Therefore, if significant economic advance is to be achieved, governments have an indispensable as well as comprehensive role in carrying through the critical and large-scale changes necessary to break down the formidable obstacles to, and initiate and sustain the process of, growth.

Such views are simply wrong. In demonstrating how they are wrong, Bauer is able to draw not only on his formidable erudition as one of our most distinguished (and iconoclastic) economists, but on his own early experience in the rubber industry of Southeast Asia and in the organization of trade in former British West Africa, where he saw these notions being disproved time and again.

"Before 1885," Bauer writes, "there was not a single rubber tree in Malaya nor a single cocoa tree in British West Africa. By the 1930's rubber, cocoa, and other export crops were being produced on millions of acres, the bulk of them owned and cultivated by non-Europeans." Rapid economic progress, including large-scale capital formation in agriculture by the local people, demonstrated the barrenness of the Western notion of some "vicious circle of poverty and stagnation" to be broken only by massive supplies of external capital. From poverty, wealth came by increments; far from stagnation, economic progress was astonishingly quick. To Bauer, watching this happen, it was "evident that the ordinary people of the less developed countries were not necessarily torpid, rigidly constrained by custom and habit, economically timid, inherently myopic, or generally deficient in enterprise."

The evidence shows, moreover, that a developed bureaucratic infrastructure was not a precondition for the emergence of major cash crops in Southeast Asia and West Africa. Instead, large numbers of local entrepreneurs devised elaborate local solutions to problems of transport and trading facilities. No one had to be conscripted; there was no forced mobilization of resources. There as elsewhere in the Third World the "individual voluntary responses of millions of people to emerging or expanding opportunities" created a gigantic transformation of local conditions.

Thus the picture, dear to the mainstream of development thinking, of a world divided into two camps, one "rich and progressing" and the other "poor and stagnating"—the latter including virtually the whole of Asia, Africa, and Latin America—"does not bear any resemblance to reality." Bauer insists upon doing justice to "the rapid growth of many poor countries and the prosperity of large groups there." And he emphasizes —what many still neglect—the role of traders in bringing new ideas, raising questions, supplying inducements and incentives, catalyzing myriad new activities, and stimulating economic activism.

Economic activism in the less developed countries is inextricably linked with the possibilities of international trade, and specifically trade with the more advanced West —another piece of reality overlooked by conventional theorists of development, with their fondness for the notion that the relation of the developed to the undeveloped world is one of exploitation pure and simple. As Bauer writes, "The materially most advanced societies and regions are those with the most commercial contacts with the West. . . . This is not surprising. The spread of material progress from more advanced to less advanced is a commonplace of economic history."

Finally, the economic activism inherent in the less developed world is something that has itself been historically thwarted by the policies of those committed to central planning and to the politicization of development. Basing themselves on the absurd and circular belief "that people in less developed countries are unable to respond to prices and market signals generally," they have devised economic measures that reflect contempt for in-

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articulate rural populations and that have stifled their choices. Once again, Bauer states the hard truth of the matter:

> Comprehensive central planning was certainly not necessary for economic advance and was much more likely to retard it. It did not augment resources but only diverted them from other public and private uses. It reinforced the developed countries, and it also divorced output from consumer demand and restricted people's range of choice.

THERE is a tremendous fund of practical and detailed observation in this book, closely tied to its author's pointed refutations of the false assumptions of conventional development theory. And there is a true respect, as opposed to just a pious regard, for human diversity. When Bauer began his field work, he more or less shared the view that the peoples of the world are homogeneous, except for special training. But what he actually encountered were startling "differences in economic performance and hence in achievement among groups." On the rubber estates, "the output of the Chinese was usually more than double the output of the Indians," despite the fact that all used the same tools and that nearly all were uneducated peasants, *and* despite the fact that the Chinese were subject to "extensive adverse discrimination" by the authorities. Throughout his field work, in many diverse places, Bauer could not escape the remarkable "differences in personal preferences, motivations, and social arrangements" among cultural groups.

Bauer writes that his early prejudices weighted physical resources (including capital) too heavily, blinding him to moral and cultural factors. Many Third World groups inhabit abundant and fertile land but live in dire poverty; it is "want of ambition, energy, and skill, and not want of land or capital," that holds them back. Conventional theories—whether of stages of history or stages of economic growth—are inadequate if they do not take cognizance of such multiform cultural and human complexity.

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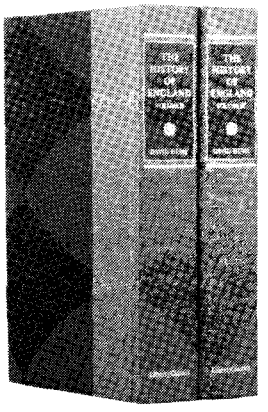

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Bauer observes, "requires concentration on concrete problems of production and marketing." Unfortunately, those who make the market work "cannot readily explain why it does so." Bauer contrasts this with "the opponents of the market order," who are "highly articulate" and whose theories serve their own political interests. On these, Bauer is characteristically withering:

> Replacement of market processes by political decisions provides power, influence, jobs, and money for politicians and civil servants. There are also bored, disillusioned, and ambitious academics who expect to benefit from such criticism, and from plans and proposals for restricting the scope of the market system. Churchmen manifestly seek a new role for themselves in the face of the erosion of their traditional functions. Increasingly they seem to regard themselves as social welfare officers rather than the spiritual leaders that once they were and still purport to be.

Fortunately, evidence from around the world, even from within the dark bowels of the socialist world, speaks louder than words about what actually works. By concentrating his mind on what works, as opposed to what ideologues say, P.T. Bauer has constructed a powerful counter-theory of development that has already won the admiration of many and is likely to attract even higher esteem in future generations than in his own, of whose conventional wisdom he has been so effective a demolisher.

Dealing With the Devil

THE TRANSFER AGREEMENT: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE SECRET PACT BETWEEN THE THIRD REICH AND JEWISH PALESTINE. By EDWIN BLACK. *Macmillan. 416 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by RICHARD S. LEVY

EDWIN BLACK here retells the story of the agreement worked out between Zionists and the Nazi government in 1933 by which German Jews were allowed to emigrate to Palestine and retrieve a small portion of their assets in various forms, including an indirect interest in imported German goods. The Zionists' motives in making this "deal with the devil" were clear and cold-blooded. Recognizing the peril of the Jews trapped in Germany, they worked to build a Jewish state in Palestine by using the capital of desperate middle-class German Jews. In doing so they rejected an alternative strategy, that of a broadly-based rescue mission; they short-circuited attempts to relocate Jews to countries other than Palestine; and they often spoke of the "rescue of assets" rather than of people. They thought these efforts realistic. Palestine's primitive economy could not then absorb limitless waves of refugees without collapsing, but the infusion of capital and skilled middle-class individuals would greatly increase the absorptive capacity of Jewish Palestine and thus enable it someday to provide a national home for all Jews who desired one. This was a rational analysis, whatever one thinks of its ethical dimension.

The Nazis made a similar analysis. In the midst of a world depression, with staggering unemployment, the highly industrialized German economy needed to export goods and maintain job levels. Moreover, it was Nazi policy at this early date to get rid of unwanted Jews while keeping most of their wealth. The transfer would allow a sorely pressed Hitler to derive economic benefits from Jewish suffering. The primary motive of the Nazis, however, was to weaken and possibly destroy a worldwide anti-German trade boycott under way since March 1933; they made the Zionist breach of the boycott a *quid pro quo* for the transfer agreement. And indeed, the boycott was undermined by the leadership of the Zionist movement. In one form or another, the transfer agreement remained in effect until the war.

All this Black covers in mountainous and excessive detail. The whole issue has been much more succinctly treated by David Yisraeli ("The Third Reich and the Transfer Agreement," in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1971), whom Black acknowledges but does not cite in his voluminous footnotes. Working from printed documents, unpublished letters, and private papers, Black is soundest in describing the complicated negotiations of various Zionist representatives and private individuals with the organs of the German government. But good history is not merely the gathering of data. On questions and issues that go beyond the mechanics of the transfer negotiations, the book is defective.

BLACK's weakness as a historian emerges in his treatment of the politics of the anti-Nazi boycott movement. He relies much too heavily and uncritically on contemporary sources, newspaper accounts, and diplomatic reports. He is content to treat actors in the events as the best experts on the state of the German economy, the importance of Jews in the functioning of the world economic system, the precariousness of Hitler's political position, and numerous other issues which require a longer perspective to be judged properly. Black's neglect of the secondary scholarly literature is perverse and leads him to his most serious error of judgment—drastic overestimation of the political and economic efficacy of the boycott weapon. I shall return to this failing.

A different sort of error is at work in Black's account of the boycott struggle in America. Here he openly sides with the representatives of mass organizations of Jews from Eastern Europe such as the American Jewish Congress and the Jewish War Veterans; these favored immediate resistance to Hitler, dramatic demonstrations, and, eventually, organized boycott of German goods. The "villains" of the piece are American Jews of German background, the leaders of elitist organizations like the American Jewish Committee and B'nai B'rith, who worked against the boycott and preferred behind-the-scenes efforts to persuade the influential.

However the leaders of these latter organizations are finally to be judged, their motives and views must be considered seriously in a work that pretends to historical

RICHARD S. LEVY *teaches history at the University of Illinois at Chicago. This is his first appearance in* COMMENTARY.

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scholarship. Black, however, dismisses them as "unwitting tools of the Third Reich" who were willing to sacrifice their relatives rather than face the reality of German anti-Semitism. Openly and by innuendo he accuses them of betraying the Jewish people because of their lingering attachment to German culture. Whereas he considers Zionist policy to have been based on reasoned assessments of the boycott's chances of success and of its potential threat to a hostage Jewish population in Germany, he brands German-American Jews as appeasers even though they reached the same conclusion as did the Zionists.

Black taxes these Jews with a lack of realism: they should have recognized Hitler's murderous intentions right from the beginning. Yet what is important is that they, like most of the rest of the world, did not; the historian's job is to explore and explain, not to sneer. Black leaves the reader woefully uninstructed on the context of Nazi anti-Semitism and the Jewish response to it.

Black's ignorance of German history and Nazism's place in it lead to equally grotesque conclusions. He relies on outmoded secondary works, makes numerous errors, and distorts his subject. One example must suffice. Black draws an unwavering anti-Semitic line from Martin Luther to Adolf Hitler; the "Luther Solution" is his term for what inspired both the transfer agreement and the Final Solution to the Jewish Question. Since the Germans were by implication simply bestial, and always had been, their actions in the Holocaust need no explanation. This may be convenient, but it is a parody of history as well as of historical interpretation.

BUT what is outrageous about *The Transfer Agreement* has little to do with its shoddiness as history. Rather, it is the three questions Black poses at the end of the book: Could the anti-Nazi boycott have worked? Was the transfer agreement with the Nazis responsible for the creation of modern Israel? Do the Zionists, who undermined the boycott movement, bear the guilt for Hitler, and, by extension, the Holocaust? To these questions Black answers yes, yes, and no, although a reader would be excused for thinking the final negative is really a yes. Serious scholars would answer no to all three.

Black asserts that for a short time in 1933 it was possible to launch a unified, organized boycott of German goods which would have toppled Hitler. He supports this assertion with no compelling proof and makes two faulty assumptions. First, he overstates the precariousness of Hitler's position in 1933. Although Black insists that Hitler was already having monumental difficulties controlling zealous party members and storm troopers, in fact this did not become a serious problem until 1934, when Hitler murderously purged them. Black resurrects the problem of unpaid German reparation debts and a retaliatory French occupation of the

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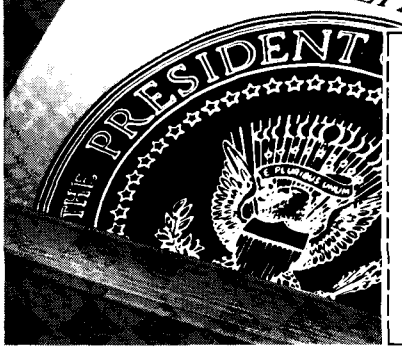

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Ruhr without mentioning the Hoover moratorium of July 1, 1931, which effectively ended reparations. Also, the rumors of preemptive military strikes by Poles and Czechs in 1933 were largely imaginary, the fears of nervous Nazi diplomats; by means of an uncritical reading of the record, Black preposterously argues that the "plans" for these invasions were provoked by the anti-Semitic persecution in Germany.

THE second faulty assumption is to equate the Nazi view of the boycott with its real potential as a political weapon. Black blithely instructs us that the "perception of reality" is often more important in history than reality itself. True enough. But in the case of the boycott, the reality was more important than either Nazi fears or Jewish hopes. The solidarity requisite for a boycott would eventually have foundered on economic facts. Germany remained, despite its economic problems, a great industrial power, and in chemicals, optics, and heavy machinery no one could produce as cheaply or as well. No government seriously considered an official boycott of German goods. The American government, for example, was almost wholly preoccupied with the danger of a German default on debt obligations to American banks. Moreover, much of Eastern Europe was dependent on its German markets, and none of Germany's trading partners, who were also in the throes of the depression, could long avoid dealing with that country unless they were willing to suffer dire economic consequences.

Finally, the boycott never had any hope of shutting off trade with Germany except by the exercise of extraordinary consumer restraint. For consumers to have sustained such action on the basis of no more than the heartening newspaper stories which Black finds so convincing was to expect a great deal. Black's own hopes for the boycott rest on a vastly inflated estimate of Jewish economic power; in this he ironically echoes the Nazis' own fantasies. But the Nazis were at least surprised when the Jews were thrust out of German economic life with so little disruption. Black remains enthralled by the stereotype.

Black further builds his case for the boycott's potential by exaggerating its adverse effects on Germany. He points to falling foreign exchange and hard-currency reserves and the desperate German expedients to meet this crisis. Only occasionally and incompletely does he acknowledge that the depression had much to do with this situation. Overdramatizing as usual, he speaks of a Germany reeling, "with bankruptcy and invasion at the door." "By early June 1933, the specter of collapse was hovering over the Third Reich." As if sensing that such inflated rhetoric does not make an argument, Black also turns to earlier historical examples of the boycott weapon. But these only make the case against him more decisively. None of the examples he cites was a clear success, many were outright failures, and a few were not boycotts at all.

Even granting the possibility of a much better organized anti-Nazi boycott resting largely on the solidarity of Jewish consumers, one could argue that it would have strengthened Hitler politically while weakening Germany economically. If Hitler was adept at anything, it was the exploitation of propaganda opportunities. This skill can be seen in his handling of the partial boycott he did face. The emergency created by "vengeful Jews" provided him with yet another pretext for extending his control over every facet of German life. In fact, long before any consumer boycott could have hoped to bring him down, Hitler had become virtually invulnerable within Germany.

THE second question—did the Nazis make Israel economically viable?—is easier to deal with and further demonstrates Black's weakness as a historian. In spite of the welter of detail concerning the transfer agreement, Black gives us little precise, documented information about the actual transfers. How many German Jews settled in Palestine? Black says 60,000 between 1933 and 1941, all of them through some form of the agreement. He cites no sources for these figures. Yisraeli, using German foreign-policy documents, tells of 32,995 emigrants between 1932 and 1937, of whom only 12,500 used the transfer agreements.

How much of the capital assets of German Jews went into building the state? Again without attribution, Black says approximately $100 million. The authoritative statistical source on the transfer (Werner Feilchenfeld *et al., Haavara-Transfer nach Palästina*, Tübingen, 1972) records $40.5 million. This is significantly less than Black maintains and shrinks further when the rise in the value of the Palestine pound and the decline of the mark are considered. Interestingly, in 1937 the Nazis debated whether to continue the transfer agreement, and decided to do so because the loss of capital was slight; regrettably, from their point of view, the agreement had a negligible effect upon German exports to the Palestine market, accounting for only 0.1 percent of the total. But they were relieved to find that the transfers in no way contributed to the building of a Jewish state.

In the absence of more detailed knowledge, the question of the Nazi role in establishing Israel must remain moot. But Black has no special claim to the truth, and his unproven assertions hold no weight. In any event, to see the creation of Israel solely as a matter of adding bricks to its economic infrastructure is to ignore a host of other factors, including the political role played by the United Nations after the war, the world's bad conscience about the Jewish catastrophe, and the Israeli war of independence. Black's logic notwithstanding, state-building is not so simple a process.

The third question Black asks and answers is the loaded one. With typical hyperbole, he accuses the Zionists of driving "a stake through the heart of the Jewish-led anti-Nazi boycott," and of granting a reprieve to the Third Reich; at the same time, however, he rejects as an "absurd" distortion the idea that the Zionists were somehow responsible for Hitler and his atrocious crimes, including the Holocaust. Yet he has a great stake in encouraging this false conclusion. Black's Zionists were chiefly responsible for sabotaging the boycott, so promising a weapon in his eyes; how from his point of view can we not blame

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them in part for Hitler's survival in power?

In various appearances before and since the publication of *The Transfer Agreement*, Black has hinted at a conspiracy against him by "extremist Jews" who might think—wrongly, of course—that he has endangered the future of Israel by "exposing" the story of Zionist negotiations with the Nazis. In fact the story has been told before, and often, and with infinitely greater sophistication. To the historical record Black has added conspiracy-mongering, innuendo, and sensationalism, but nothing new, and much that is both factually wrong and morally shabby.

Partner

First Lady from Plains. By Rosalynn Carter. *Houghton Mifflin. 370 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by Diana West

The Carter White House seems to have spawned more memoirs more quickly than any other, a phenomenon that may owe something to the advent of the word processor. Jimmy Carter, Hamilton Jordan, and Jody Powell have offered their stories to the public, and now, with *First Lady from Plains*, we have the tale told from the perspective of the former President's better half and "political partner."

While Mrs. Carter's narrative proper begins in Plains, Georgia, long before the presidential election that made the Carters international figures, the book opens with a prologue devoted to Inauguration Day, 1977. With her sharp eye for detail, Mrs. Carter vividly recreates the day, recalling the dawn blackness, the sound of jackhammers blasting ice off Pennsylvania Avenue—and her own worries about her new permanent. Describing the day's events in the present tense, Mrs. Carter lends to them a dreamy, cinematic quality:

> And we keep walking and waving, smiling and laughing, warm as we go through the snow and ice. . . . I suddenly think about all the obligations and responsibilities we have assumed. I am now in the White House as First Lady. . . .

In light of the four years that followed, "reruns" of the cheers and promises of that day strike an oddly disconcerting note.

Turning from the shining hour of the Inauguration, Mrs. Carter looks to her early days in Plains. There, as everyone knows, she and Jimmy Carter grew up, "three years and three miles apart." And there she experienced a childhood that seems a cross between *The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* and an Andy Hardy movie. She read, she sewed, she fell in love with her best friend Ruth Carter's brother. Married to Jimmy at eighteen, she left Plains armed with a guidebook called *The Navy Wife*. When Jimmy later decided to quit the Navy and return to Plains, Rosalynn Carter thought her life was over; she characterizes the bitter, painful fight that ensued as "the most serious argument of our marriage." She lost, he won—which may account for the monumental significance of the quarrel. Her description of the car ride home, occurring long enough before the two of them had intruded on history so that it stands as something merely personal, is one of the few sympathetic moments of the book:

> I had a long time to think about it as we packed the children into the car and began to drive South. And I became more and more dejected the closer we got. I didn't want to live in Plains. I had left there, moved on, changed. But Jimmy was determined—and happy. I stared straight ahead in sullen silence as we drove into town. He was grinning from ear to ear. Never had we been at such cross-purposes. I thought the best part of my life had ended. But Jimmy turned to me with a smile and said cheerfully, "We're home!"

It was in Plains, of course, that Jimmy Carter became involved in activities that ultimately launched him, and her, on his cosmic political career.

Throughout her book, Rosalynn

Diana West, *a new contributor, is assistant editor of the* Public Interest.

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Carter is candid about differences between her husband and herself, particularly differences of temperament. When Jimmy decided to run for the Georgia State Senate, she was astonished that he would even try: "But that is one of the fundamental differences between Jimmy and me. I don't like to take a chance on losing. I always want to win!" It becomes evident on reading *First Lady from Plains* that Mrs. Carter accepts defeat with greater difficulty than does her husband. Over the years, her desire to win developed into an overwhelming drive, and the young woman who "felt so afraid [she] usually didn't try" grew into the woman who says, "I would be out there campaigning right now if Jimmy would run again. . . . [W]hen all is said and done, for me, our loss at the polls is the biggest single reason I'd like to be back in the White House. I don't like to lose."

To put it mildly, the lady takes her husband's victories and defeats personally, responding to election results as if the votes were tallied for her—and, as the public would discover, in many ways they were. As a matter of course she writes, "I am much more political than Jimmy." In the months before the 1980 election, her husband was "not nearly as concerned about the campaign as I." Later, as the results of the election became evident, an aide remarked on the President's lack of bitterness. Mrs. Carter writes, "'I'm bitter enough for both of us,' I said. I meant it."

With such insights, we may better understand what Rosalynn Carter means when, describing her tenure as First Lady of Georgia, she says, "I was more a political partner than a political wife." According to both her own and her husband's memoirs, nothing changed after the couple became ensconced in Washington. Jimmy Carter writes in *Keeping Faith*:

> Rosalynn's attitude toward her White House duties was shaped by her experience as my business and political partner and her life as First Lady of Georgia. On the campaign trail, she had been as familiar with domestic and foreign issues as anyone around me, and had assumed the same basic responsibilities as I had. . . . Both my staff members and news reporters knew that she could speak for me with authority. All of us turned to her for sound advice on issues, and political strategy.
>
> It was only natural that when we arrived in Washington she would pursue these kinds of activities. . . . It was most helpful for me to be able to discuss questions of importance with her as I formed my opinions.

Mrs. Carter tells us, "Though I could seldom sway him when his mind was made up, he always listened." The reader is left to wonder what happened when the President's opinions were still unformed.

Mrs. Carter has a habit of speaking of her husband in the first person plural, which may at first seem endearing but soon becomes alarming. Of the Inauguration Day crowd she observes, "All those people. And we are responsible to them and for them." Of the area which, as First Lady, she made her special interest: "Fortunately, we were now in a position to make mental health a top national priority." Of the 1980 Democratic convention: "We had won the nomination." Apropos Ronald Reagan: "His politics were so bad . . . that I thought we could beat him with no trouble."

But if she refers to her husband as "we," she speaks of herself, emphatically, as "I" and "me." Of her trip to Latin America in 1977: "The whole field of foreign relations was new and exciting for me." It may be nice to know that international affairs kept the President's wife entertained, but, in view of their touted partnership, what does this say about the Carter administration's conduct of foreign affairs? At one point during her tour of Latin America, an American reporter confronted the First Lady with a question that nags at the reader throughout:

> "You have neither been elected by the American people nor confirmed by the Senate to discuss foreign policy with foreign heads of state," he said. "Do you consider this trip an appropriate exercise of your position?"

The one foreign-policy triumph of the Carter administration, Camp David, is recorded in great detail. The episode is obscured, however, by Mrs. Carter's account of the crippling fiasco which spanned the final 444 days of the Carter Presidency. It is painful to be reminded of the morass in which the United State foundered under Jimmy Carter in those days, and astonishing that the events should be related with such an air of righteous pride. There are enough yellow ribbons and candlelight vigils here to make any reader cringe. What is nowhere to be found, however, is even the subtlest hint of the role President Carter played in letting the Shah fall as precipitously as he did.

Just as she sees the revolution in Iran erupting as if in a vacuum, Rosalynn Carter views the rise of Ronald Reagan as occurring independently of the mandate of the American people. In her eyes what defeated her husband was "the philosophy of a new President," a philosophy that bore no relation to the public will. It is as though Ronald Reagan usurped presidential power in 1980, playing wicked Prince John to Jimmy Carter's Richard the Lionhearted. This assessment, like many others in the book, is as naive as it is brazen, a combination all too characteristic of Rosalynn Carter herself. "I never forgot I was there because my husband held his high office," she writes. Neither, one hopes, will anyone else.

Politics of the Cell

Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony. By Lewis Thomas. *Viking. 168 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by Ronald Bailey

As a rule, scientists who share the dominant predilections of the literary establishment are lionized regardless of their competence to comment intelligently upon social and political problems. In recent years, one who has benefited particularly from this dispensation has

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Ronald Bailey, *a new contributor, is a free-lance writer on scientific and economic subjects.*

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been the biologist-physician Lewis Thomas, whose latest best-selling book, *Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony*, has been universally praised by reviewers and was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection.

One of the reasons Thomas has achieved such success as a writer is that his "biology" is itself unthreatening, anthropomorphized to such an extent that it could virtually serve as a script for a Walt Disney children's film. Instead of "nature, red in tooth and claw," he offers a benign universe characterized by civility and orderliness. It is no wonder that timid literary critics feel at home in the not-so-wild world depicted in Thomas's books.

Thomas's own medical and scientific credentials are sterling. He was educated at Princeton and Harvard, and worked as a research pathologist and medical administrator at the Rockefeller Institute, New York University, Bellevue Hospital, and the Yale School of Medicine. For seven years he was president of the Sloan-Kettering cancer center in New York, and is now its chancellor. He is also the author of three books, *The Youngest Science* (1983), *The Medusa and the Snail* (1979), and *The Lives of a Cell*, which won the National Book Award in 1974. Thus it is as a genuine eminence in the scientific community that Thomas comes before us with his implicit claim that the objective findings of biology justify his political and moral point of view.

Thomas's political notions inform the whole of his latest collection of delicate, "literary" meditations. Many of the essays are devoted to the "threat of nuclear war" but these are among the least interesting and original; in them, Thomas characteristically decries the general situation while offering absolutely no concrete alternatives. More paradigmatic of the way he insinuates his predilections into purportedly impartial scientific analysis is his essay, "Altruism."

As his prime example of altruistic behavior, Thomas cites the honeybee that stings an intruder in defense of its hive even though by that act it will surely die. Thomas then states in passing the standard scientific objection to his characterization of the honeybee's behavior as altruistic:

> It is easy to dismiss the problem by saying that "altruism" is the wrong technical term for behavior of this kind. The word is a human word, pieced together to describe an unusual aspect of human behavior, and we should not be using it for the behavior of mindless automata.

Without bothering to refute this point, Thomas blithely asserts barely a paragraph later:

> Animals have genes for altruism, and those genes have been selected in the evolution of many creatures because of the advantage they confer for the continuing survival of the species.

This is not in any sense, however, a factual scientific conclusion. While it is true that there are instances of what appear to be altruistic behavior in nature, close examination of such cases as that of the "self-sacrificing" honeybee reveals that its behavior is actually quite selfish—that is, in the generally accepted Darwinian sense that individual animals always act to maximize their reproductive success. Owing to the haploidy-diploidy of their species, sterile female worker honeybees share with each other a three-quarters genetic relationship, rather than the usual sibling relationship of only one-half. So when a sterile female worker honeybee commits suicide, as in Thomas's example, she does so selfishly, to perpetuate her genes through her fertile sisters, the queen bees of the future.

Thomas's other example of so-called altruistic behavior is the warning cry of a bird, which seemingly exposes it to greater danger than other members of the flock it warns. Recent research disputes this interpretation, arguing that such warning cries are attempts to attract another predator to the scene to attack the first predator.

In any case, the whole controversy over altruistic behavior is sufficiently open to render wholly unwarranted Thomas's bald and scientifically unsupported assertion that animals "have genes for altruism." Nor is he correct in implying, in

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the same passage, that "group selection" operates in evolution, i.e., that genes act to assure the survival of a species as a whole. As the anthropologist Melvin Konner points out in *The Tangled Wing: Biological Constraints on the Human Spirit,* it is

> the almost universal view among biologists that evolution proceeds primarily through competition among individuals and their kindreds. The selection or elimination of larger population units is, at best, very uncommon. Beyond that, the concept has numerous difficulties, the chief of which is that no one has ever observed an animal group . . . in which the group functioned so much as a unit that individual competition was successfully suppressed.

A species survives to reproduce its genes because members of that species survive—collectivities survive only because the individuals that make it up survive.

WHY DOES Thomas make two false assertions about the facts of biology when surely a man with his training must know that they are wrong? The answer is to be found in the moral and political lessons he wishes to wrest from nature. Building upon his claim that genetically determined altruism exists in nature, Thomas writes:

> If we are to take seriously the notion that the sharing of similar genes imposes a responsibility on the sharers to sustain each other, and if I am right in guessing that even very distant cousins carry at least traces of this responsibility and will act on it whenever they can, then the whole world becomes something to be concerned about on solidly scientific, reductionist, genetic grounds.

Thus by an ill-founded intellectual sleight-of-hand Thomas derives an "ought" from an "is." If one took Thomas's perspective to heart, one might logically reach the conclusion that prey sacrifice themselves voluntarily for the good of predators. Unfortunately, his airy castle of speculation collapses when confronted by the facts of biology. There are no scientifically confirmed instances of purely altruistic animal behavior. On the question of how human beings should behave toward one another, nature is totally silent.

In his attempts to lend an air of scientific respectability and objectivity to his own point of view, his willingness to pass over inconvenient biological facts when they conflict with that view, and his general penchant for *a priori* reasoning, Thomas displays a curious affinity with the proponents of "scientific creationism." For both he and they distort and ignore biological facts in an effort to mold a world closer to their hearts' desires. Like the Social Darwinists of the last century, if in a wholly different direction, Thomas seeks to use biology as a justification for his own vision of society. By thus politicizing science, he contributes to undermining the very activity he claims to revere.

The Commissar's Wife

THE EXILE: A LIFE OF IVY LITVINOV. By JOHN CARSWELL. *Faber & Faber. 216 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by
ANITA SUSAN GROSSMAN

IVY LOW LITVINOV (1889-1977) has long deserved to be the subject of a book, as much for her life as for her writing. The first-born daughter of the scholar and educator Walter Low and the novelist Alice Herbert, she was the author of two novels—one mildly scandalous—and a friend of D.H. Lawrence when in 1916 she chose to marry an obscure Bolshevik conspirator in exile in London. Her life as the wife of the Soviet diplomat Maxim Litvinov occupied her for the next several decades, and during those years she produced few original publications: in Russian, a handful of stories; in English, a detective novel set in Moscow in the 1920's, part of a political pamphlet, and occasional short pieces that found their way into publications like the *Manchester Guardian* and *Harper's Bazaar.* (She also translated into English her husband's speeches and party tracts and later such Russian classics as Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov.) Only in old age and long after the death of her husband did she produce a volume of short stories on English and Russian life; its title, *She Knew She Was Right* (1971), echoes her favorite, Trollope. The following year she returned from the Soviet Union to England, to be joined in time by her daughter Tanya and grandson Pavel.

Her final years were spent adding to a disorderly pile of unpublished manuscripts, but never producing the volume of memoirs about high life in the Kremlin that was expected of her. In fact, she always remained something of an outsider, and her fifty-year sojourn in the Soviet Union owed more to personal loyalty to her husband, and later her children, than to sympathy with Communist ideology *per se.*

FROM the beginning her heritage had been out of the ordinary. Her paternal grandfather, a Hungarian Jew, had emigrated to England, made and lost a fortune, and sired a family of eleven children who were raised in the Anglican faith. Of the three who grew up to be journalists, two of them, Sidney and Maurice, were later knighted for their service to the empire; another daughter, Dr. Barbara Low, helped introduce Freud's work to England.

Ivy's father Walter, the fourth son, had to work his way through the university; he became a translator of Norwegian literature and a tireless writer on language, literature, and history, in addition to producing the *Educational Times* with his friend H.G. Wells. His death at thirty, when Ivy was five, she always regarded as one of the greatest catastrophes of her life. (Her mother Alice soon remarried, this time to a British Museum authority on illuminated manuscripts, a man whom Ivy came to despise as a conventional mediocrity.) Yet another Low aunt, Edith, had married Dr. David Eder, a well-known Zionist and social reformer. It was through this contact that the grown-

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up Ivy was to meet her future husband, Maxim Litvinov.

THAT the match was unlikely no one knew better than Ivy herself. Litvinov, born Meyer Genokh Wallakh to Orthodox Jewish parents, had long been a committed revolutionary, escaping from a czarist jail in 1902 to follow Lenin to England. By the time of their marriage he was a plump, businesslike forty-year-old, of regular habits, with all his energies directed toward his political activities, whereas Ivy had a passion for literature, a youthful enthusiasm for unconventional behavior, and, apart from a general sympathy with socialist causes, little direct experience with Bolshevism. Another difficulty apparent from the beginning was a certain sexual incompatibility between them which only deepened through the years, so that the physical part of their marriage was over by 1928 and both, to some extent, went their separate ways. Eleven years after her marriage we find Ivy writing to a confidante of an adventure with a doctor in Berlin which had left her "sort of happy. Had something I never had before. Beginning with an 'o.'" Of Ivy's numerous affairs (which in later life were exclusively with women), some appear to have led to more serious relationships, although her biographer is unclear on this point. What is certain is that during her frequent trips abroad she behaved with far less discretion than might have been expected from the wife of Stalin's foreign commissar.

Maxim, too, sought solace elsewhere, including a romantic involvement with the stepdaughter the Litvinovs had adopted some years before, a girl the same age as their daughter Tanya. It was partly as a result of their estrangement that Ivy found work in Sverdlovsk, hundreds of miles from her family, teaching Basic English at a teacher-training college. The break was never complete, however, and she was reunited with her husband when he fell into disgrace in 1939 with the signing of the nonaggression pact with Nazi Germany and the discarding of the policy of "collective security" he had represented throughout the 30's. Litvinov was replaced by Molotov and stripped of his membership in the Central Committee, and he seemed in imminent danger of arrest, a fate that had already befallen most of his colleagues and staff in the Foreign Ministry during the purge years. Fortune smiled instead, and Maxim was summoned into service again as ambassador to the United States in 1941 when Russia entered the war. His tenure was brief, though, for by 1943 Stalin was beginning to turn away from his policy of wartime cooperation with the U.S., and had him recalled.

Litvinov's last years of enforced retirement were embittered, as he saw the policies he had striven for abandoned in favor of a grab for power in Eastern Europe. At a 1947 diplomatic reception he sourly remarked to a British journalist that the men in the Kremlin "refused to believe that good will could be the basis for any policy" and instead intended to get "all they could while the going was good." All things considered, Litvinov was lucky to die in his bed at the end of 1951, just when Stalin's last anti-Jewish purge was about to get under way.

He left behind a secret manuscript of political memoirs, which he had had Ivy place in a New York safe-deposit box before her return to Moscow in 1943. Somehow the authorities got hold of it, and after his death Ivy was summoned to the Lubyanka prison to explain about it. (She was lucky as always: they took no action against her.) About the same time a volume surfaced in Paris purporting to be the intimate journals of Litvinov. They were published in England and America as *Notes for a Journal*, with an introduction by the historian E.H. Carr, but were soon shown to be a forgery, probably by the former Soviet official Gregory Bessedovsky. The real memoirs are apparently locked in the archives of the Narkomindel (Soviet Foreign Office), where they are likely to remain forever.

IVY'S own career as a writer revived during a year-long visit to England in 1961. Many of the stories she wrote in the 1960's appeared in the *New Yorker* and lat-

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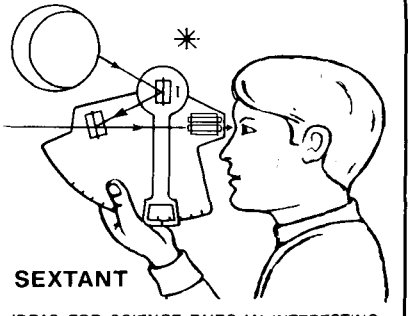

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er in the collection *She Knew She Was Right*. The stories set in England, particularly the autobiographical ones concerning her early life, are written in a breezy, ironic manner that also characterized her earlier memoir of a visit to D.H. Lawrence where she amusingly portrays the breathless naiveté and energy of the girl she was. In Ivy's writings, whether fiction or memoir, her mother appears as a splendidly comic figure; a popular romantic novelist in middle age, she was always the professional siren, priding herself equally on her worldly wisdom and her physical appearance (artfully enhanced by padding and various other aids). In Ivy's story, "She Knew She Was Right," her mother appears as a widow with three little girls who keeps two of them out of sight so as to let her suitors believe that she has only one "encumbrance."

The Russian pieces, although written with the same loving attention to domestic detail, seem to lack the tone of ironic mockery and thus owe more to Chekhov than to Jane Austen. There is a kind of tenderness in describing the cramped lives of fairly ordinary Soviet citizens—middle-aged and older women who go to state vacation homes and worry about the children they have left behind. Love is reserved for female friends or for children and grandchildren rather than for members of the opposite sex. In "Bright Shores" an attempted tryst between a middle-aged Soviet woman and a visiting English physicist is foiled by the sudden arrival of a woman friend recently released from a concentration camp. Deeper loyalties force the woman to relinquish her one chance for adventure; she reflects that "you couldn't, not for a moment, repulse a friend who came to you from a camp." In "The Boy Who Laughed" a mother and grandmother devote their lives to a retarded boy whose own father has abandoned them because he cannot stand living with the child in such close quarters.

By all accounts, John Carswell would seem to be uniquely qualified to be Ivy's biographer. He is the son of one of her earliest friends, Catherine Carswell, and knew Ivy from his childhood and years later after her return to England. A British civil servant since 1946, Carswell has a long record of scholarship in political history; more recently he has ventured into literary scholarship with *Lives and Letters* (1978), a study of five writers. He was given access to Ivy's unpublished writings and private papers by her daughter Tanya, the friend to whom he dedicates this book.

Given all this, the book's deficiencies appear all the more puzzling. To begin with, there is a lack of necessary documentation. We are given no sources for many of the quotations and other pieces of specialized information that Carswell serves up; nor are we even given a bibliography of works by or about Ivy Litvinov, although many articles were written about her during her lifetime, and her own short pieces are scattered throughout British, American, and Russian magazines. As a result, the reader who seeks to look up other of her writings will receive only haphazard assistance from Carswell. Moreover, although her biographer acknowledges that the bulk of her career was spent as a translator, he tends to shrug off this aspect of her work, mentioning only a handful of the many Russian books she translated. (Similarly, he stresses her lack of interest in politics, apparently unaware of her contribution of several chapters to the 1920 edition of her husband's pamphlet, *The Bolshevik Revolution: Its Rise and Meaning*.) And as for Maxim Litvinov, although Carswell directs us to several sources, he neglects to mention the best brief biography in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* (Academic International Press, 1981), or the only Russian book-length study of him, a laudatory account by N. Kornev (Moscow, 1936).

Such scholarly deficiencies betoken a larger carelessness and indifference. Carswell writes gracefully, and the inherent interest of his subject carries us along through his narrative for the most part. But then we are brought up short by some detail that does not fit, some statement inadequately prepared for that makes the account break down momentarily into incoherence. Consider, for instance, Carswell's matter-of-fact claim that Ivy's mother had all of her daughter's teeth removed when she was seventeen and replaced with plates. As a dental practice even in 1906 this sounds questionable, but we are given little explanation as to why this unlikely event occurred. Later in the book, when referring to Ivy's love affairs, the author attempts to tread a wary path between total revelation and discreet silence, but the effect is only to confuse the reader. Thus we are informed in a casual aside of "the American Joe Freeman, with whom Ivy was at that time [1926] in love; perhaps with the deepest passion she ever felt for any man"—and he is never mentioned again, not even to explain who on earth he was (a once-popular Communist writer); so much for the greatest love of her life.

The book is filled with similar offhand references that remain unannotated and therefore needlessly mystifying. Although Carswell found Ivy in her old age an eccentric, not to say dotty, figure, his book has plenty of eccentricities of its own. Even the selection of photographs seems peculiar: why is there no picture of the parents who meant so much to Ivy?

Still, it is better that the book has been written than not. Carswell does attempt to explain why Ivy did not produce more writing over the years, mentioning her interest in her English past over her Russian present, and the obsessive perfectionism that kept her working on successive drafts of the same piece. More inhibiting still was the habit of discretion acquired as a diplomat's wife in a police state. Her biographer perceptively notes the irony of Ivy's situation, which was at once uniquely privileged and stifling for her as a writer. Judging from what she did manage to publish, and from the sample of her other writings which the author provides, she was in fact a fine prose stylist who deserves to be more widely read. If *The Exile* causes this to occur, it will have amply justified its publication.

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Endowing Culture

THE DEMOCRATIC MUSE. By EDWARD C. BANFIELD. *Basic Books. 244 pp. $15.95.*

CULTURE AND POLITICS. By RONALD BERMAN. *University Press of America. 172 pp. $10.95.*

EXCELLENCE & EQUITY: THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES. By STEPHEN MILLER. *University Press of Kentucky. 192 pp. $17.00.*

Reviewed by CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

THE evening before starting this review, I was part of the audience for the Nashville Symphony's annual opera production, this year a satisfactory rendition of *La Traviata*. As usual, the printed program named and thanked hundreds of individuals, corporations, and foundations whose contributions helped underwrite the large costs of staging a full-fledged grand opera and thus enabled me to buy a ticket (up near the roof, to be sure) for ten dollars. But there, listed alongside the private donors, one also came upon a grateful acknowledgment of the support of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and its Tennessee state affiliate.

Thus arise the questions that Edward C. Banfield seeks to answer in a provocative Twentieth Century Fund study: is there in the American democracy a compelling reason for government—especially but not exclusively the federal government—to augment private philanthropy in subsidizing the opera and other visual and performing arts so that more of us can enjoy them at lower prices than we would otherwise have to pay? Are there also harmful consequences of such subsidies that may offset whatever good they do?

These are interesting and important issues, but in the real world they are essentially moot. A few months hence, the Arts Endowment and its sister agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)—the main subject of Ronald Berman's and Stephen Miller's books—will celebrate their twentieth anniversaries. Conceived and gestated in the Eisenhower and Kennedy years, born in the most fecund period of the Great Society, and having passed through a remarkable growth spurt in the early 70's, the twin endowments are now mature members of the Washington family. They have large and clamorous constituencies around the country. They enjoy the support of Presidents and key Congressmen of both parties. Though at the start of the Reagan administration their fates were briefly in doubt, in time they were blessed by a Presidential Task Force and are now so securely settled that Mr. Reagan's Arts Endowment chairman, Frank Hodsoll, is today a prominent member of the otherwise predictable crew of arts advocates, foundation executives, and academics who are flaying Banfield's book and disputing its conclusions. The only recurrent dispute between the White House and the endowment-boosters on Capitol Hill concerns spending levels.

At the Arts Endowment, the objects of these expenditures—now totaling some $150 million a year—are not much different from what they have ever been. Individual artists of many kinds receive grants and fellowships to sustain their "creative" work in many genres. Institutions, such as museums, opera companies, and universities, obtain funds to acquire, develop, produce, display, and perform. The media garner subsidies with which to beam various artistic performances to mass audiences. And quasi-governmental agencies, such as the state arts councils, automatically receive sizable sums both to distribute at the retail level in their communities and to aid and abet the "art lobby" that in turn makes sure that Congress hears plenty about the urgency of increasing the President's budget for the Endowment.

Banfield regards such activities as inappropriate and unnecessary

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on several grounds. Because there is no generally agreed-upon definition of "art"—and because the Endowment has shrewdly avoided settling on one of its own—there can be no meaningful standards against which to appraise particular artists, institutions, or projects. The Constitution contains no explicit mandate for the federal government to develop the aesthetic sensibilities of the populace, yet utilitarian arguments for public support of the arts—easing urban tensions, improving mental health, fostering tourism—imply wildly unrealistic expectations and thus (if the NEA were ever to evaluate the impact of its programs, which it has not done) near-certain failure.

The Arts Endowment, Banfield contends, can be certain of accomplishing only one thing: transferring resources to individuals and institutions that are very pleased to receive them, are increasingly dependent upon them, and ardently desire more. This is a familiar enough governmental pattern, but Banfield argues that in certain respects it may lead to actual harm: to subsidies for the production and display of shoddy art, to a widening gap between the fine and applied arts, and also to needlessly rapid inflation in the "value" of original works of art as subsidized museums bid vast sums against one another, thereby enriching some art dealers and artists but making it harder for ordinary people to own works of art.

Government support has not only affected commerce in the arts; it has also accelerated their politicization and that of the culture in general. In the early years of the Carter administration, Banfield recalls, Joan Mondale was not only the Vice President's spouse but also honorary chairman of the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, in which capacity she presided over regular meetings of a group of officials who concluded "that a comprehensive plan for government action was needed to raise the cultural life of the nation." This led to the preparation by the Arts Endowment of a 150-page "General Plan" and to a round of congressional hearings in which then-chairman Livingston Biddle (former college roommate and aide to Claiborne Pell, whose Senate subcommittee oversaw the work of the Endowment) began to muse on such matters as the utility of arts programs in reducing truancy rates, in eliminating problems caused by ethnic differences, and so on. A bit skeptical, Congressman Sidney Yates (who then as now chaired the House subcommittee that controls Endowment appropriations) said, "I wonder whether we should explore truancy. You are going to wind up with something like Vietnam or some other national goal." Biddle hastily replied that the elimination of truancy was not necessarily the point; rather, "that through the arts, young people were becoming interested in education." "Perhaps you will find the kind of social ends you want to reach," Yates observed; "I had some trouble with that one."

That nothing much came of the NEA master plan, however, had less to do with ideological dispute than with the organizational imperative that has dominated this agency since its inception: meticulous avoidance of clear definitions, precise standards, and large distinctions, lest the Endowment rile any elements of its ever-growing constituency for ever-growing appropriations, approbation, and legitimacy. Though we should probably be grateful that the nation does not yet enjoy an official, federally-sanctioned definition of "art," we must understand that this is primarily because those administering the National Endowment for the Arts perceived that any such definition would curb their essential opportunism. Had they concluded otherwise, we would likely be working our way toward a national arts policy that would one day rival the Internal Revenue Code.

Banfield's treatment of these matters is already the subject of intense controversy. Hilton Kramer has written in the *New Criterion* that the book "turns out to be anti-democratic as well as anti-aesthetic," in part because of its suggestion that government should assist with the manufacture and distribution of high-quality reproductions of paintings and sculptures rather than helping a handful of major museums control access to the costly originals. This scheme, Kramer contends, ignores the key distinction between a "work of art" and a facsimile thereof, and would drive the original works into the private collections of wealthy connoisseurs where they would be forever concealed from the gaze of ordinary people.

Another sizable flaw in *The Democratic Muse* is its inattentiveness to the fundamental difference between the Arts Endowment's two main activities. One might be deeply skeptical about the government's role in subsidizing the *creation* of artistic works—doubtful that suitable aesthetic standards can be maintained, even more doubtful that government should delve so deeply into the culture as to set any such standards—while still welcoming federal support for the conservation and display of works of art that authorities deem outstanding. Moreover, if the Arts Endowment is indeed here to stay, such a distinction could yield more workable guidelines for those who set its policies, appropriate its funds, and administer its programs.

THE central issues faced by the National Endowment for the Humanities are somewhat different. Though preservation and display of works of humanistic scholarship have always been part of its mandate, the NEH was created primarily to support advanced research in these disciplines. In that sense, it is more closely akin to the National Science Foundation than to the Arts Endowment. But because scholarship in the central disciplines of the humanities is a cause without enormous popular appeal, the Endowment's leaders have proffered more sweeping rationales for its work.

Former chairman Ronald Berman was extremely successful in this effort during the early years of the Nixon administration—the period in which both endowments achieved their greatest growth. In *Culture and Politics* he recounts a consequential conversation in the Oval Office during which his "main business was selling the agency to the man who could do the most for it." He made four points to the President: expanding the Human-

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ities Endowment was a way of reducing "the isolation of Republicanism from the intellectual mainstream"; it would help restore respect for serious disciplinary study on the nation's tumultuous college campuses; it would cause "large audiences outside the universities" to develop keener interest in the humanities; and it would hasten the reversal of the cultural decay of the 60's and the restoration of "intellectual and moral seriousness."

No doubt these visions were tempting at the time. Certainly they seem to have persuaded President Nixon to give Berman his head—and to ask Congress for huge increases in the Endowment's budget. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems fairly clear that such claims were exaggerated, even hubristic. But the attempt was made.

RONALD BERMAN is a Shakespeare scholar of consequence, and as chairman he had a clear sense of what the humanities are, why they are important, and how to tell good from bad. (The NEH's four leaders have all had "credentials," even as the chairmen of the Arts Endowment have all been amateurs with respect to the substance of their agency's work.) Yet fully half his book—essentially a memoir of four years as chairman—recounts efforts not so very different from those undertaken at the Arts Endowment to expand audiences, to build constituencies, and to invent defensible justifications for the expenditure of more money than the agency had ever had before. These included subsidies for a number of television series, the mounting of "blockbuster" exhibitions at major museums (the history of art having been defined as one of the humanities, the NEH could edge onto the NEA's turf in this manner), and the conversion of what might have been a crassly commercial 1976 bicentennial celebration into something of a showcase for the American heritage.

Berman's taste was generally keen and his stewardship of the Humanities Endowment yielded few disasters. Indeed, his eventual fall from grace (as he tells it) resulted mainly from his refusal to yield to congressional pressure to spend money on activities he deemed unworthy. In particular, Berman got onto the wrong side of Senator Pell—the principal villain in this saga—when he resisted the peculiarly populist demands of that patrician solon to award small grants to "grocers and woodcutters" with which to read great books in their spare time, and to give automatic annual subsidies to humanities councils in the fifty states. Pell eventually came to regard Berman as both an intellectual snob and a recalcitrant bureaucrat and set out to block his reappointment. The Ford White House was as weak-kneed as the White House usually is when an agency head acquires enemies on Capitol Hill, and after a protracted effort by Berman's admirers, the whole painful episode was brought to an end by Carter's election and the subsequent appointment of Joseph Duffey to the NEH chairmanship.

In addition to offering a lively saga of bureaucratic expansionism and Washington intrigue (and far too many typographical errors), *Culture and Politics* contains a thoughtful, short disquisition on the politics of culture and the role of government in supporting the arts and the humanities. Though more incisive with respect to the foibles and machinations of the Arts Endowment, Berman acknowledges a few missteps taken in the name of the humanities while he headed NEH and is properly critical of efforts to redefine the humanities into agents of moral uplift and to construe federal support for their study and teaching as if this were a social welfare program. "The humanities cannot, I almost regret to say, make us better citizens. It is the great misconception of our time that doing things that are good for us, we become good."

STEPHEN MILLER also knows well both the humanities and, as a result of many years on its staff, the Humanities Endowment. He may, in fact, know it too well, for his book contains so much detailed information as almost to obscure his theses, which might better have been advanced concisely in essay form.

As the title, *Excellence and Equity*, suggests, Miller is much taken with the tension between the high hopes of the scholars who originally urged establishment of the NEH—to advance the humanities primarily by supporting first-rate research—and the populist impulses that have tempted its leaders over the years to enlarge its base of support and to please its congressional overseers by expanding the Endowment's "public programs," by distributing the agency's largesse more broadly than "merit" would warrant, and by capitalizing on diverse contemporary trends and political fads.

That tension is real enough, and is more than amply illustrated in Miller's pages. But it is also one that cannot be wished away, nor is it likely that restructuring the agency (as Miller suggests) would solve the problem. All government agencies are political creations, and all must pick their way across a shaky tightrope stretched between their particularized missions and their need to maintain public support.

The more important question, perhaps, is how specialized agencies such as the twin endowments are regarded by the Presidents who select their leaders. And whom do they select? In 1977, President Carter chose Senator Pell's protégé to head the Arts Endowment. As for the NEH, the New York *Times* reported a White House memorandum instructing the committee then searching for Ronald Berman's successor to pay less heed to the "Ivy League, academic, and scholarly establishment" and to look for a chairman who would "be familiar with organized labor, ethnic organizations, community and junior college organizations, and principal educational broadcasters. . . ." The person selected was also the spouse of a key White House political strategist.

TODAY, the endowments are no longer growing rapidly, but both still occupy sizable niches in intellectual, scholarly, and cultural affairs. The NEA, again headed by a well-connected political operative, continues to subsidize my enjoyment of *Traviata* but does not ap-

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pear to have become any more precise about its responsibilities or punctilious about its standards. It is thus an easy mark for criticisms, including those advanced by Edward Banfield. But they will have scant impact, for the NEA has fastened itself with silken cords to the artistic and cultural elites of virtually every community in the United States. It helps pay for institutions and organizations that are widely assumed to do only good things, and its very failure to be rigorous about definitions, priorities, and program evaluations has left it so shapeless as to have practically no enemies, save for the fastidious few who wince at the sight of public funds used for the ugly and trivial as well as for the beautiful and lasting.

Over at the Humanities Endowment, by contrast, one now encounters intellectual ferment, principled argument, and a much bolder strategy. The current chairman, William J. Bennett, has set about to restore the intellectual integrity of the humanities insofar as it is within the command of a federal agency head to do so. In matters of domestic cultural and education policy, he now occupies a position roughly analogous to that of Jeane Kirkpatrick in foreign policy, and is equally unabashed, articulate, and steadfast. Not only is the tiny NEH education division doing more to strengthen teaching and learning in the nation's schools than the entire Department of Education, but the Endowment is also (along with the Justice Department) the only agency in Washington to refuse to classify, hire, and promote its employees according to race, ethnicity, or gender.

The NEH is thus no less "political" than its twin but—at least for the moment—it evokes a quite different image of politics. The Arts Endowment embodies the domestic equivalent of appeasement, making it indistinguishable in this regard from a hundred other Washington agencies. The NEH, on the other hand, is currently succeeding at something that is rare indeed for a government agency: communicating principles, standards, and clear ideas about what is important. As readers of the July COMMENTARY know, it invited Sidney Hook to deliver the 1984 Jefferson Lecture, perhaps the most prestigious intellectual event under government auspices. And it has enabled thousands of schoolteachers to spend the summer studying classic texts of the humanities under the tutelage of competent scholars.

Culture, Matthew Arnold wrote, seeks "to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere." That this quest is worthy, even noble, does not mean it is without risk when attempted by government. Yet it seems to me we must assume that Washington's twenty-year incursion into the arts and the humanities has become permanent. At least for the present, one of the responsible agencies is conducting its affairs in a manner that Arnold would approve. The second is rather more problematic. I sense that it is doing some good and little actual harm. But perhaps my judgment has been clouded by the fact that Violetta died so well in the closing scene the other evening.

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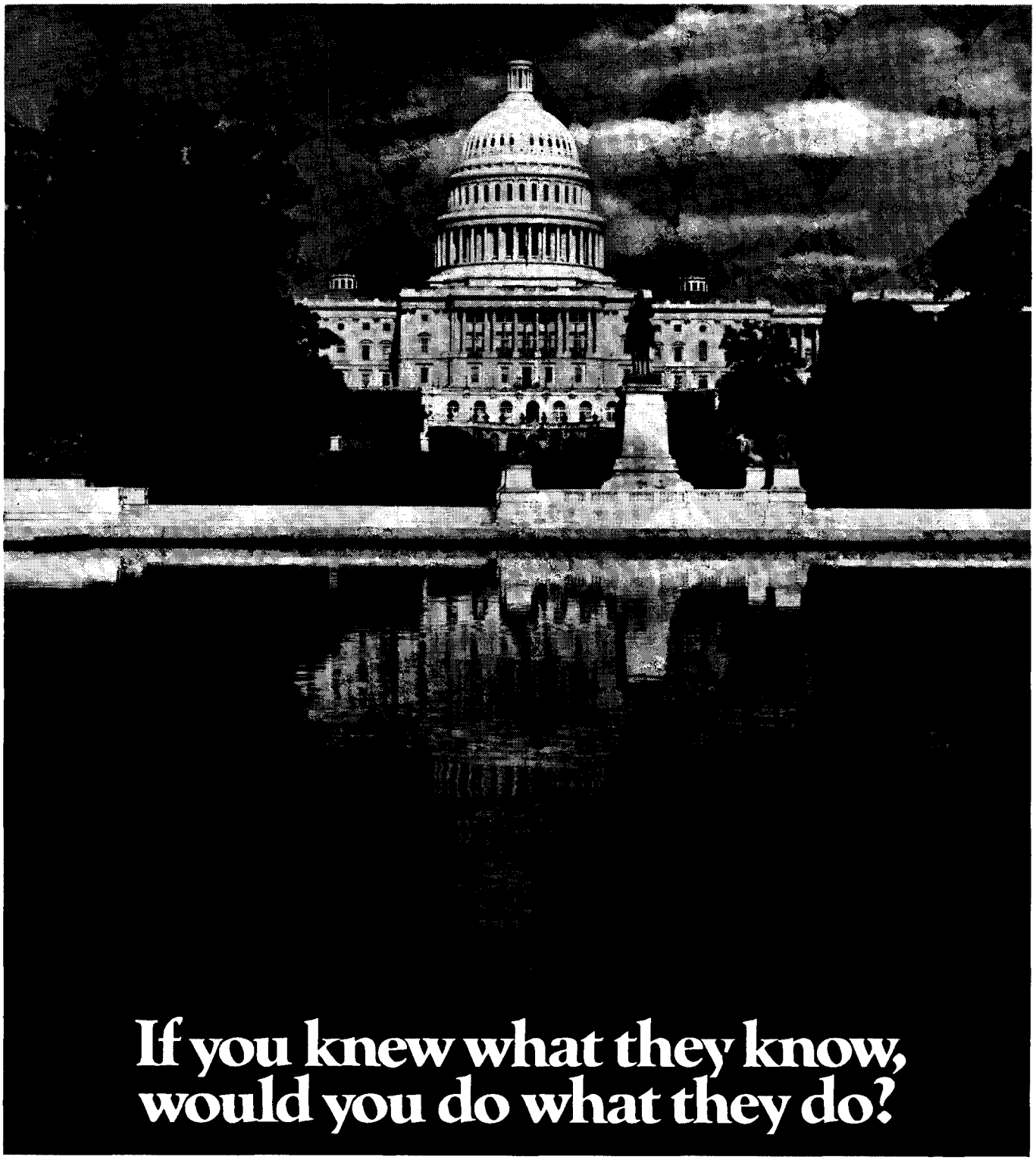

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